

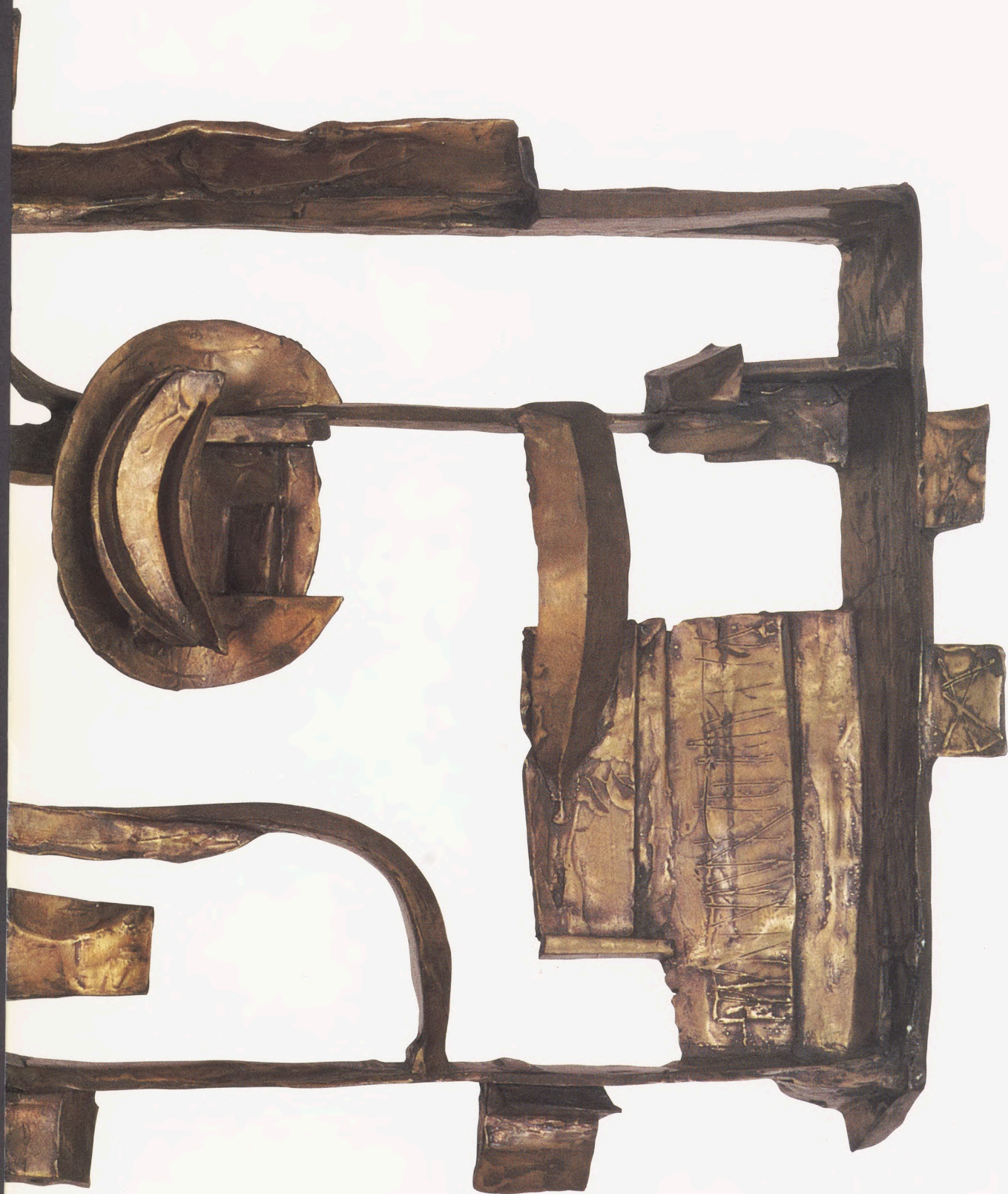
Dorothy Dehner Sixty Years of Art

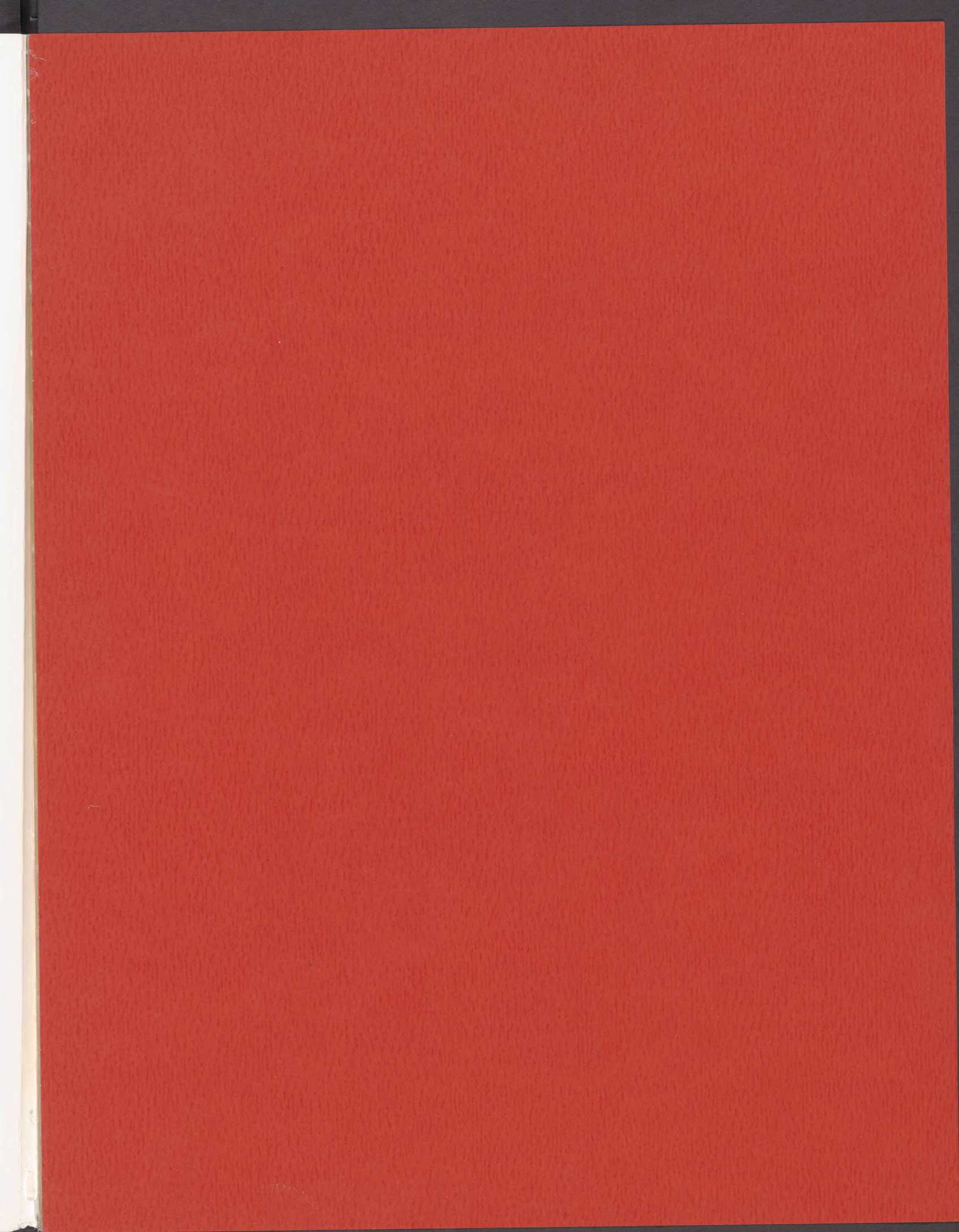


Katonah Museum of Art

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1993







Dorothy Dehner Sixty Years of Art

Katonah Museum of Art

Joan M. Marter, Guest Curator

Professor of Art History

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Exhibition Tour

Katonah Museum of Art
June 13, 1993–September 5, 1993

The Hyde Collection
October 16, 1993–November 28, 1993

The Corcoran Gallery of Art
December 18, 1993–March 7, 1994

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Publicity: Harrison Edwards, Inc.

Catalogue Design: Marc Zaref Design, New York
Printing: Meridian Printing
Typesetting: Trufont Typographers, Inc.

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Katonah Museum of Art
Route 22 at Jay Street
Katonah, New York 10536

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 93-077392

ISBN: 915171-29-5

Distributed by The University of Washington Press

Funding for this exhibition has been provided in part by the Westchester Arts Council, with funds from Westchester County and the corporate sector, and the Exhibition Patrons of the Katonah Museum of Art.

This publication is underwritten in part by Olga Hirshhorn, The Ida and William Rosenthal Foundation, and The Norman and Rosita Winston Foundation, Inc.

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cover:

Low Landscape Sideways, 1962
Bronze, 18 x 48 x 6 in.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York

Foreword

Dorothy Dehner: Sixty Years of Art is an exhibition that attests to the struggles this determined artist faced on her often trying creative journey. From her early two-dimensional works to her monumental steel pieces, Dehner's life was consumed by the creative process. As this exhibition demonstrates, she deserved the critical acclaim she received early on in her career.

The Museum is delighted to host this exhibition of Dorothy Dehner's works on this our fortieth anniversary. We are fortunate to have had the full cooperation of Ms. Dehner and we are very grateful for her invaluable assistance. She is a remarkable individual whose unique talents have provided us with a group of compelling and complex works. We are also in the debt of our guest curator, Joan M. Marter, who has long been a champion of Dehner's contributions to Abstract Expressionism. As a follower and scholar of Dehner's work, Dr. Marter aptly demonstrates her own talents by the thoughtful selection of the works that are included in this exhibition. We acknowledge the generosity of our lenders including Richard Eagan and Twining Fine Art. As project directors, Patricia A. Grabel and Lee Karsch have done a superb job. Ms. Dehner's work has sparked considerable interest and we appreciate the participation of The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, and The Corcoran Museum in Washington, D.C. Lastly, the Museum owes a debt of gratitude to Olga Hirshhorn for her support of the exhibition catalogue. Her personal involvement and commitment not only reaffirm the importance of Dehner's work but also endorse the Museum's objective in exhibiting her art.

George G. King
Executive Director



Dorothy Dehner with *Sanctum with Window II*, 1990–91 and small maquette

Dorothy Dehner: Sixty Years of Art

by Joan M. Marter

When I first met Dorothy Dehner she had been a successful dancer, she had been to Europe and studied art for a year, and though younger, she was the most sophisticated student I had met at the Art Students League where we both were studying. . . . In her work there are qualities of the dance, delicacies, refinements, and harmonies which I greatly admire because they are so far from my own world. Certainly her paintings show the distinction of her personality and direction.

DAVID SMITH, 1948.¹

Dorothy Dehner, now in her ninety-first year, is still the creative artist she has been for more than sixty years. She began exhibiting when she was already in her forties, and although her paintings, drawings, and sculpture are owned by major museums, the full recognition of her achievement has come only in recent years. In the passage cited above, David Smith, her first husband, praised the special character of her art, and yet her principal achievement as a sculptor had not yet begun. Her history is replete with the joys and sorrows of a life experienced to the fullest measure. Her art has originality, wit, and monumentality, and this retrospective celebrates her remarkable sculpture and related works on paper.

When Dorothy Dehner turned to sculpture in 1955, she had already received very favorable reviews for her abstract watercolors. In 1952, for example, Dore Ashton wrote:

Few artists today can handle line with the lyric fidelity demonstrated by Dorothy Dehner. In her first solo show of watercolors, Miss Dehner reveals a delicate sensibility and temperament. . . . Although chiefly non-objective, many of these watercolors are expressive of place and mood.²

One of these watercolors was acquired by The Museum of Modern Art shortly after the show in 1952. When Dehner first began exhibiting her sculpture three years later, she was represented by the well-established Willard Gallery in New York, and quickly rose to prominence as a leading member of the New Sculpture Group. In 1957, her work was already included in a show of American artists at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome. By 1960, her work was sent to Paris for "Aspects of American Sculpture," and she was invited to participate in many group exhibitions of contemporary sculpture in the United States. Frequently, her work was praised by critics. Ashton, for example, called her sculptures "sensitively fashioned bronzes . . . ranging from architectonic structures spreading on a flat base to intricate, often witty, compositions suggesting figures, gardens, and classical themes."³

Although Dehner had not exhibited in New York before the 1950s, she quickly assumed her place among abstract sculptors of the period. Clearly, Dehner

was of the generation of the Abstract Expressionists. In the 1930s, she counted among her friends John Graham, Arshile Gorky, Adolph Gottlieb, and Mark Rothko. During the period when artists worked for the Works Progress Administration and joined the American Artists' Congress, she shared in their leftist politics. In the 1940s, she visited the Cedar Tavern with David Smith, and in the following decade attended meetings of The Club. During the 1950s, she created etchings at Atelier 17, and participated in group exhibitions at the Stable Gallery where many artists of the New York School were shown.⁴ Dehner was invited to send her sculpture and her prints to many international exhibitions that were organized to introduce American artists abroad.

Because of her working methods, her concern for individual expression, and her totemic and mythic imagery, Dorothy Dehner can be associated with artists of the New York School. She is among a number of sculptors, notably Peter Agostini, George Spaventa, Reuben Kadish, and Sidney Geist who used traditional materials and methods to realize avant-garde works.⁵ Dehner's sculpture needs to be examined in the context of fifties' abstractions—much as other American sculptors of the 1950s can be viewed as having a community of purpose. While it is true that the Abstract Expressionists dismissed the work of women, and considered sculptors of their time only distant relatives, Dehner was active in these years, and received critical recognition by the late 1950s.⁶ She was included in many group exhibitions of sculptors, and was frequently singled out for favorable comments.

Irving Sandler wrote in 1960:

Until a few years ago, modern sculptures were often treated as objects on which to park ashtrays by people who wanted to look at paintings. This attitude has completely changed. And one of the most significant developments in recent American art has been the emergence of a group of original and dynamic sculptors. The works of many of these artists are currently on display in the sixth exhibition of the New Sculpture Group at the Stable Gallery. . . . Several of the most interesting artists in the Stable show, among them Peter Agostini, George Spaventa, and Dorothy Dehner continue to find the more traditional techniques of carving and modeling better suited to their intentions.⁷

Dehner's art has remained closely tied to her life experiences and shows a deep-seated need for an individual expression, and freedom from the domination of stylistic constraints. The works that resulted are indeed a distillation of her life experiences. Dehner's rich and varied life is the eventful journey to her artistic maturity.

In 1955, she wrote:

I have a number of ways of working, and they are all part of the same way, and I seldom discard ways, but add to them and use the old ones and carry them all with me as I do my life from childhood. I want to express my feelings and thoughts, and I want to distill them so they will be pristine and clear and come back at me. . . with a new life they never had when inside me.⁸

From childhood, Dehner thought of herself as an artist; she drew and painted constantly. In her teens, she studied modern dance with one of the original members of the Denishawn School, performed at the Pasadena Playhouse, wrote poetry, and studied piano. Theater was a particular attraction for this shy young woman because it offered the opportunity to assume a new persona. Having come to New

York in 1922 to study drama, Dehner performed in three plays before turning her attention to art. She traveled abroad at the age of twenty-four, and was dazzled by the famous "Art Deco" show in Paris (officially l'Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes) of 1925. Returning to New York later that year, she enrolled at the Art Students League, where Isabel Bishop, Irene Rice Pereira, and George McNeil were among her fellow students. Dehner had intended to study sculpture; unfortunately, the instruction at the League seemed *retardataire* after her experience with Cubism and Constructivism in Europe. Dehner found sculpture instruction with Robert Laurent (who was a direct carver and considered progressive by American standards) too conventional. She confined her art instruction to drawing and painting.

Dehner met David Smith in September, 1926, when he moved into her rooming house on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Smith was impressed with her knowledge of the European avant-garde and the two aspiring artists became fast friends. They were married in 1927, and resolved to pursue their activities as artists. Smith and Dehner studied painting with Jan Matulka, and it was in this class that she created her first Cubist-related compositions. In 1931, the young couple traveled to the Virgin Islands where they both worked on still lifes. Dehner painted on gessoed crates, introducing textural effects by adding sand to the pigments. These paintings were accomplished abstractions, still indebted to synthetic Cubism, but with organic forms predominating, particularly shells and marine life.

A trip to Europe in 1935 was to have a lasting impact on Dehner's art. She and Smith visited France, Belgium, and Greece, and later Russia and Great Britain. During the five months they spent in Greece, she made sketches in black and white. These drawings became the basis for sculpture years later, when even chosen titles such as *Minotaur*, *Knossos Inhabited*, and *Demeter's Harrow* acknowledged the enduring impression on Dehner of Greek art and mythology.

Many of Dehner's oil paintings of the 1930s continue to show the impact of her training with Matulka. *Still Life* (pl. 1) includes textural effects, and features a structural clarity that suggests the work of Purist painters such as Amedée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier. Another *Still Life* (pl. 2), painted just five years later, is far more representational. Having been married to Smith for ten years at this time, she deliberately backed away from making her work "more abstract" as Smith had urged her. This skillfully handled oil on canvas is among a group of paintings, later destroyed, in which Dehner seems to be determined to follow a separate direction from David Smith who was making Cubist still-life paintings in addition to his sculpture.

Dehner, temporarily at least, resisted the impulse of avant-garde painters, and turned to gesso panels she named the "Life on the Farm" series. More than eighteen small egg tempera paintings depicting scenes from her daily routine at Bolton Landing, New York, ranged from allegorical to those conceived in the naive style of a folk artist. Although these idyllic studies suggest one aspect of her life in the early 1940s, the reality was always more varied, good experiences mixed with more painful ones. Drawing and painting became her source of personal sustenance, her means to freedom from her troubled relationship with Smith.⁹

Dehner continued to draw and paint with no interruptions, but her artistic career was eclipsed during the twenty-three years that she lived with David Smith;

only in their final years together did she begin to show her work and win awards. However, Dehner and Smith were closely involved in their creative activities during the 1940s. She gave titles to his sculptures, posed for some of his works, and participated in the progress of his welded metal constructions.

Dramatic works on paper made in the 1940s are among the most provocative of Dehner's career. The "Damnation Series" consists of painstakingly rendered pen-and-ink studies of nude figures, accompanied by vultures, bats, and other animals. "Suite Moderne" includes ghoulish figures dancing gigue, fandangos, and gavottes, all of which become "Dances of Death." Such images relate to postwar tensions, but have more to do with her state of mind in these final years of her marriage.

Given the 1945 date of *Landscape for Cynics* (pl. 3), it might be assumed that this ink and gouache study featuring a gigantic cockroach can be related to the destructive forces of World War II, or to the detonation of the first atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. An alternate reading of this work is a more personal one—the jagged hills and barren terrain indicative of the disturbing events of her personal life at Bolton Landing. In 1945, Dehner separated from Smith for five months and in the following years her carefully executed studies in pen and ink are an expression of her troubled state. *Desert* (pl. 5) is an acknowledged self-portrait,

David Reading About Himself, 1941
(from *The "Life on the Farm" Series*)
Gouache on paper, 7½ x 5½ in.
Collection Storm King Art Center, Gift of
Margaret Hovenden Ogden



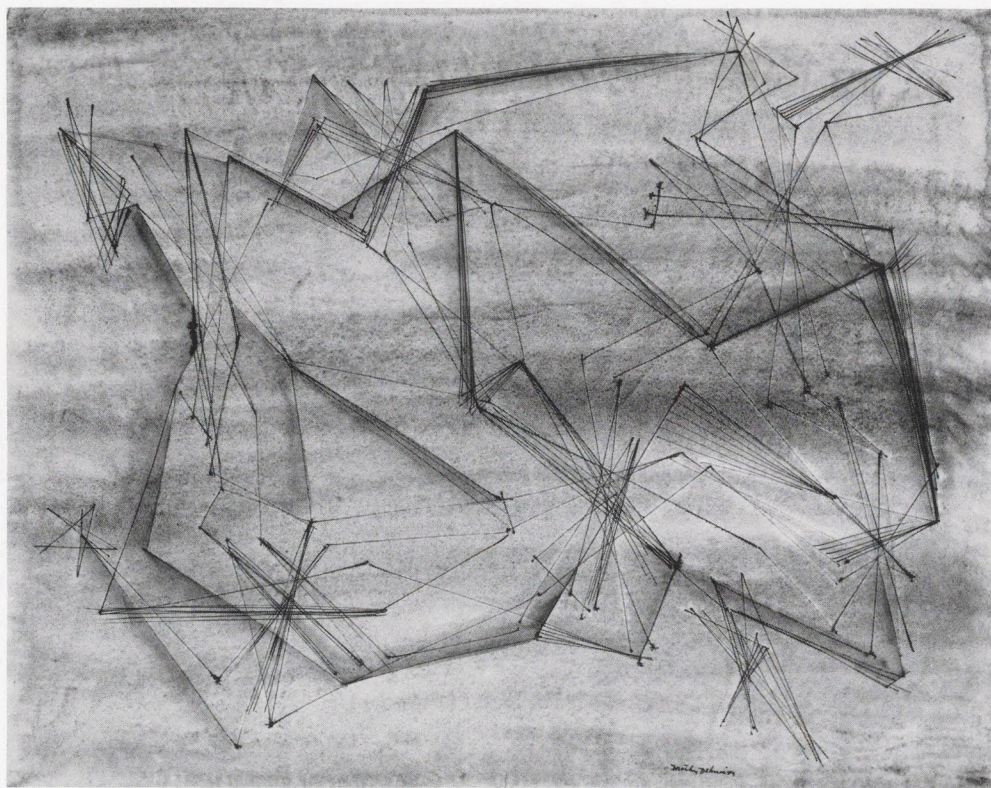
and features an emaciated woman who cries out in pain as she wanders through a barren landscape. Contrast this with the self-image of a woman knitting as portrayed seven years earlier in *David Reading about Himself*. The growing tensions in her life are evident.

Country Living (Bird of Peace) (pl. 4) is an ominous image of a skeletal creature who appears to writhe in agony over a similarly barren landscape of animated, jagged peaks. This skeletal form is derived from *hesperonis regalis*, a prehistoric flying creature considered to be an ancestor of predatory birds. Smith and Dehner both used a photograph of this object purchased at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Smith repeated this skeletal form in several other sculptures, notably *Royal Bird*. Dehner made a number of pen-and-ink studies in which the creature more closely resembled the original photograph than Smith's sculptures did.

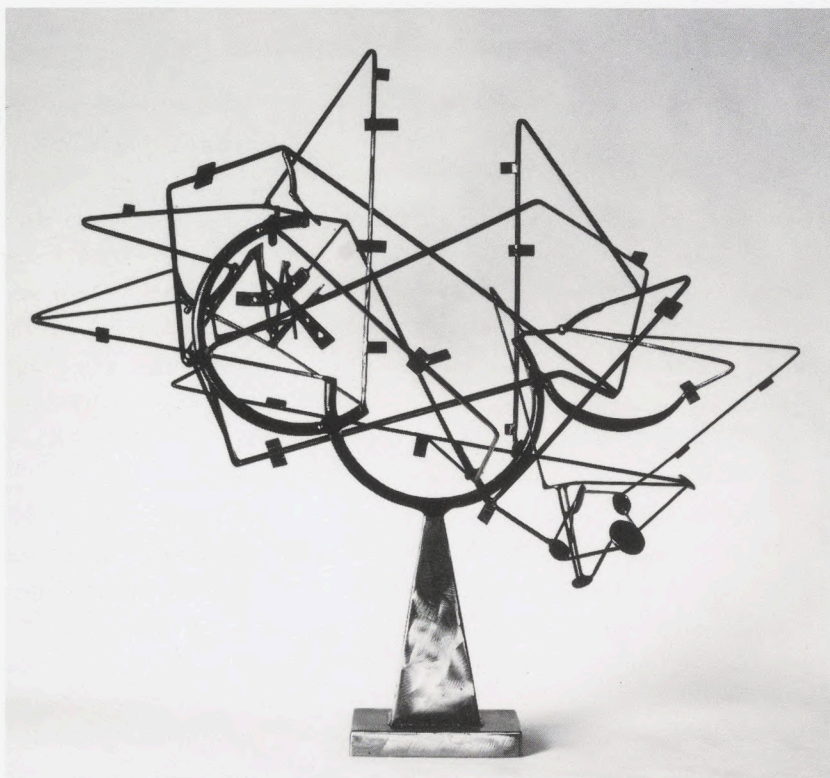
When her solo exhibition opened at Skidmore College in 1948, Dehner's confidence soared, and she resolved to pursue a personal direction for her art. The transition from representational renderings of her surroundings to abstraction is evident in such works as *Finger of Winter* (pl. 6); here, a view of the snow-covered Adirondack Mountains is fused with repeated chevrons to form a composition of lively patterns.

In *Virgin Island Series* (pl. 7) and other drawings in ink and gouache of the late 1940s, Dehner introduced a repertory of biomorphs. She no longer pursued disquieting effects in her imagery, but celebrated the animate energy of these natural forms. Her lyric sensibility tempers this imagery with a mood of tranquil revery. She seems to have renewed her original interest in sculpture, for her drawings include abstracted personages which suggest the possibility of a three-dimensional realization. In evoking her Virgin Island sojourn, Dehner harkens back to the coral pieces and shells that Smith found and fashioned into his very first sculpture, while she continued to work on oil paintings and drawings. Now the urge for sculpture returned. By the late 1940s, Smith began working in wax, and Dehner was quietly making her own sculptural experiments using the wax that she helped Smith to cook up in the kitchen. The resulting models were hidden away and later destroyed, but the desire for sculptural expression can be found in many drawings of these years.

Star Cage records Dehner's new-found confidence in abstracted imagery of the cosmos: vividly blue washes are punctuated by dots of bright yellow. Jagged lines in the composition evoke the constellations of the evening sky. When she was working on this drawing, Dehner recalled that Smith came into her "studio," a corner of the living room, and told her that he liked it, and would be interested in making a similar sculpture. Dehner suggested that they might create a sculpture together, but Smith rejected the idea. Declaring himself "too jealous" for a collaboration, Smith was renewing what Dehner perceived as a serious injunction against her work in sculpture. (Not surprisingly, Dehner did not pursue the active creation of sculpture until after her divorce from Smith). Three weeks after admiring the drawing, Smith constructed *Star Cage*, a steel construction painted deep blue, which was undoubtedly indebted to Dehner's drawing. Although Smith never acknowledged the connection, the sculpture features three large curving forms attached to a pyramidal base. Dehner's lyrical allusion to the constellations is transformed into linear elements punctuated by small rectangles.



Star Cage, 1948
Ink and wash on paper, 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, IN
Gift of the American Academy of Arts and Letters



Star Cage, 1950. David Smith
various metals, welded, painted dark blue.
44 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 51 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Collection Frederick R. Weisman Art
Museum, University of Minnesota,
Minneapolis
Purchase, John Rood Sculpture
Collection Fund

In 1950, Dehner left Bolton Landing and divorced Smith two years later. She took classes at Skidmore College, and obtained a degree, then came to New York City where she taught at various schools, including the Barnard School for Girls. Most importantly, she was able to pursue her art with freedom and determination.

She developed new techniques and improvisational effects in her drawings in the early 1950s. She splattered paint with a brush, and then combined the results with geometric forms rendered in pen and ink (pl. 19). She applied wet sponges to the paper, and then painted wet-on-wet, deliberately creating blurred images that were then combined with more precisely painted elements (pl. 13). Her drawings varied from biomorphic forms to a network of black structural lines. Fantastic imagery coexisted with more Constructivist-related forms.

When Dehner was fifty-one years old, she had her first solo exhibition in New York at the Rose Fried Gallery. She studied engraving at Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17 in New York, and it was there that her desire to create sculpture returned. By 1955, she was working at the Sculpture Center and continuing the experimentation with wax that she had begun at Bolton Landing six years earlier. She recalled:

The minute I started doing sculpture I felt that it was something I had done all my life. I had no problems with energy. Of course I was not a green student. I had been in the art world long enough to have accomplished and to have determined certain images that came to me quite naturally. I wasn't fumbling for technical competence because the technical problems were dictated by the concept of the sculptures. . . And I wanted to work in wax because I liked the idea of it; it's so malleable and yet it isn't messy like clay, which never appealed to me. It was a great revelation, I loved working with the material.¹⁰

Sculpture dominated Dehner's interest for the following thirty-eight years, complemented by drawings and prints. In 1955, the year of this major breakthrough in her art, a new stability came to her personal life. She married Ferdinand Mann, and his affection and support for her work continued unabated until his death in 1974. The serenity and inner harmony that came to Dehner's life and art are amply reflected in her achievements of the sixties and seventies.

Torgate (pl. 34), one of her earliest bronzes, shows a scaffolding of wax slabs that is similar to architectonic drawings made several years earlier (pl. 16). Using the lost-wax method, rather than rods or sheets of metal that are welded into position, she manages to achieve an openwork construction that relates to the Constructivism of the early twentieth century. The sculpture bears many similarities to the predominant abstractions of the 1950s, including openwork direct metal constructions by Ibram Lassaw, and the cage constructions of Herbert Ferber and Seymour Lipton. Links with Alberto Giacometti and David Smith are suggested by this work, particularly Smith's cage constructions of the 1930s and early 1940s. Yet Dehner's works embody a very personal evocation of architecture; she named the work after gateways in China. In their twisting rhythms, there is a strong allusion to nature, which is found in many of these early bronzes.

Dehner was included in a Paris show in 1960, "Aspects of American Sculpture." It is informative to compare her work (pl. 38) to other sculpture in the exhibition, for it is within the shared approaches of this group of works that Dehner's sculpture can be situated. Like other examples, her work is characterized

"Aspects of American Sculpture"
 Claude Bernard Gallery, Paris,
 October, 1960
 (Dehner's *Hanging Sculpture* in the rear
 of installation)



by improvisational methods which create abstract elements. Vegetative and architectural forms predominate. Spiky elements combine with swirling and twisted metals. Mazes and scaffolding are suggested by some works while others resemble organic forms. A few, like Dehner, used the traditional lost-wax process. However, Dehner developed her own direct working method: the sculptures were literally "constructed" from sheets of wax. She built up the sculptures as other artists might weld metal sheets, and then she attached various smaller shapes to enliven the surfaces. Working like a Constructivist, she contrasts linear and spatial elements, and creates tensions between light and shadow while remaining deeply personal rather than simply formalist. The titles are a clue: she makes references to sites from antiquity that she visited with David Smith in the early years of their marriage (Knossos, Malta etc.).

Other bronzes have more contemporary references for the artist. *Looking North F* (pl. 42) relates to the view she had from her studio windows at Union Square—a complexity of interlocking planes and patches of sky. Some are architectural, suggesting the scaffolding of an imaginary structure; others are totemic, primitive fetishes that refuse to reveal the ultimate mystery and magic of their inception. Some spread along the ground like landscapes, others are suspended like cosmic forms. Working freely, and with great inventiveness, her art is like an imaginary journey. Throughout this period, she extends the traditional limits of sculptural expression.

Low Landscape Sideways (pl. 36) moves laterally, and suggests a panoramic view of nature. One is reminded that David Smith often made sculptural landscapes, but here the differences in Dehner's sculpture are striking. She eschewed the biomorphic elements found in Smith for the more regular geometric forms that are presented in a planar composition. Faceted elements and an actively worked surface cause the sculpture to shimmer in the light.

All of Dehner's bronzes are unique works, for the very act of casting these pieces in bronze destroys the original model. In the traditional lost-wax process, a heavy surface of wax adheres to a plaster model covered with an outer mold. When the molds are heated, the liquefied wax runs off, thus leaving a "skin" of bronze that hardens around the mold. Ultimately the inner plaster is removed, and a hollow sculpture is the final form of the work. In the case of Dehner's bronzes,

the wax melts away and is replaced by bronze. Therefore, the sculpture is not hollow, but a solid form. Admittedly, the openwork construction that she favored was perfectly suited for this method, and the work has something of the appearance of direct metal construction.¹¹ However, the cost of bronze casting such works was prohibitive and most of her sculptures, though monumental in conception, were under four feet in height.

Her drawings have often been closely related to the sculptures. Although they are not actual studies for specific three-dimensional works, they are often enigmatic, evocative, and symbolic. Although Dehner's sculptures are abstract, they consistently make reference to the natural world. *Encounter* (pl. 41), a work consisting of six separate sculptures, alludes to a chance meeting of people both in composition and in concept. The disparate totemic forms relate to one another, as individuals of varying sizes and proportions. This work, as well as others, suggests human gestures or evokes journeys through time. Her abstract sculptures represent a personal iconography that recurs over the decades. Imagery of circles, ellipses, wedges, and arcs abound. Like the artists of the New York School, Dehner's art acknowledges that abstract symbols can communicate content that is private, but with universal implications.

In 1965, a major retrospective of Dehner's art was held at The Jewish Museum in New York City. The coherence of her artistic achievements as a sculptor was a tribute to her progress in a medium she had seriously explored for only a decade. Once Dehner had mastered the technical skills of producing sculpture, she began to make larger pieces of singular presence and power. Both the scale and the monumentality of her works increased. The artist evoked architectural forms, and some of the totems became human-scale.

In 1974, the year her second husband died, Dehner unconsciously changed her medium. She began to construct pieces using small wooden elements. While the bronzes have textured surfaces, the wooden constructions rely solely on variations of the graining to create lively visual effects. These wooden constructions have a strong association with architecture, and with her friendship with Louise

Installation view of the Dorothy Dehner retrospective at the Jewish Museum, 1965



Nevelson. Works that Dehner refers to as "toy-like" can also be considered to include fragments of memory and time. *Window with View* (pl. 46) includes various woods with different grainings and tonalities. Other architectonic structures in wood, featuring thrusting verticals or stacked elements, resemble the skyline of a fanciful city.

Six years later, Dehner started a new series of works of heroic proportions in corten steel. These powerful sculptures are fabricated, and based on earlier works from the sixties and seventies that were originally cast in bronze from wax models. Dehner's sculptures have always been monumental, even when they were created in small scale. *Demeter's Harrow* (pl. 52) originally a small bronze of 1970, attests to her longstanding involvement with imagery rich in personal associations. The myth of Demeter and Persephone was always one of Dehner's favorites.¹² In this corten-steel construction, polygonal and circular forms extend outward in a sculptural composition that suggests a dynamic interplay of space and mass. With this sculpture she alludes to a farm implement, but also to the Goddess of the Corn, who made the fields rich with fruits, flowers, and leaves. Demeter was also the sorrowing mother of Persephone, maiden of the spring and summer, who died every year, and returned to the underworld. Demeter, therefore, was associated with the earth's fecundity, but was also a goddess who mourned for her beloved child. Thus, the mythological reference seems fitting for Dehner herself, who had known mourning from her earliest years, and worked as an artist to sustain herself in times of personal anguish.

Such examples as *Scaffold* (pl. 47) and *Prelude and Fugue* (pl. 49) are a reminder that Dehner's work has always emphasized contour and the dialectic of space and mass. From the beginning, she approached the use of wax as a Constructivist using planar elements, and, therefore, the translation into fabricated steel was successful. In her sculptures of the 1950s, Dehner frequently incised or braised the wax slabs. Fabricated works in black steel such as *Portal* (pl. 54) have echoed her impulse to create lively surface effects by attaching small elements that transform the steel plates into more active compositions.

Dehner's sculptures have always been monumental in conception, but only in the past decade has she realized the powerful effect of her forms on a heroic scale. *Sanctum with Window II* (pl. 56), for example, a fabricated steel piece that measures thirteen feet in width and height, was based on an early bronze. Now the fully architectonic character of the work is in greater evidence: a large enclosure simultaneously affords a view into the landscape. *Encounter* (pl. 50) is a powerful, sentinel-like work that is a twelve-foot-high version of one of the elements that first appeared in a six-part sculpture of 1969. *Prelude and Fugue* (pl. 49) and *Chopiniana* (pl. 58) are like musical compositions joining graceful curves to geometric volumes in creating a harmonious effect.

Due to failing health, in recent years Dehner has turned to her earlier drawings, and has found in them remarkable opportunities to create large, fabricated sculptures. *Dark Harmony* (pl. 59) is an example of one of the works based on a drawing from 1983 of the same title (pl. 28). Silhouetted planes with jagged protrusions resemble the pieces of an elaborate puzzle. More directly related to previous drawings are the wall constructions in aluminum, completed in 1992 (pl. 57). These constructed works are translations of drawings created forty years earlier. Dehner has taken the geometry of interlocking planes and the network of

interpenetrating linear patterns to a three-dimensional realization.

In assessing Dorothy Dehner's contribution to American sculpture, it is not sufficient to recognize her as a neglected artist of the Abstract Expressionist generation; rather, the entire period needs serious reevaluation. Her works, as well as those of many artists active in the post-war years, were part of the individual expressiveness deemed essential to the New York School, but later put aside for the recognition of a few (male) artists (Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Mark Rothko are among those who came to "define" Abstract Expressionism). It is time to realize how narrowly this period has been viewed, and to rediscover the rich and varied offerings of others, particularly artists of the 1950s. Dorothy Dehner's sculpture, drawings, and prints hold special meaning and importance. Like her contemporaries, she acknowledged that abstract art could communicate a profound message, but her art is also like her life: a model of persistence, independence, and devotion to creative abilities. Within the panoply of New York School artists, Dehner's achievements are a powerful and enduring testimony, a silent witness to a long journey.

Notes

1. Quoted from introduction by David Smith in "Dorothy Dehner," Skidmore College, December 6-15, 1948. My deepest gratitude to Dorothy Dehner for sharing this brochure with me, and for her assistance with all of her scrapbooks and photographs. I am grateful also for Dorothy's discussion of her work and her life, dating back to 1978. These interviews form the basis of the details of Dehner's artistic career and personal life that I have presented in this essay.
2. Dore Ashton, "Dorothy Dehner," *Art Digest* 26 (May 15, 1952): 19.
3. Dore Ashton, "Dorothy Dehner," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1957.
4. For more information on American art of the 1950s see Irving Sandler, *The New York School, The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978) and Dore Ashton, *The New York School, A Cultural Reckoning* (New York: Viking Press, 1972).
5. For more information on sculptors of the 1950s see Whitney Museum of American Art, *The Third Dimension, Sculpture of the New York School* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1984) and Wayne Andersen, *American Sculpture in Process 1930/1970* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975): 89-134.
6. David Smith certainly made the distinction between works by women and men, since he repeatedly judged Dorothy as the best of the women artists he knew (interview with Dehner). Lee Krasner also acknowledged that a woman artist was not taken seriously by the Abstract Expressionists. She stated in an interview: "It's quite clear that I didn't fit in, although I never felt I didn't. I was not accepted, let me put it that way. . . With relation to the group, if you are going to call them a group, there was not room for a woman." [see Michael Cannell, "An Interview with Lee Krasner," *Arts* 59 (September 1984): 8.
7. Irving Sandler, "In the Art Galleries," *New York Post*, 1960 (taken from the scrapbooks of Dorothy Dehner, Willard Gallery).
8. Dehner statement from brochure of show from Terrain Gallery, December 5, 1955-January 15, 1956 (from Dehner Scrapbooks).
9. For additional discussion of Dehner's relationship with David Smith, see Joan M. Marter, *Dorothy Dehner and David Smith: Their Decades of Search and Fulfillment* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1983).
10. Taken from a transcribed interview with Dorothy Dehner, January, 1979.
11. It is interesting to note that few women worked in direct metal construction. The oxyacetylene torch did not attract many women artists. Among the few to experiment was Gertrude Greene who worked in welding during the 1930s. In the 1950s, Claire Falkenstein, who was primarily interested in jewelry, was working in direct metal.
12. Interview with Dehner, January 22, 1993.

I

Still Life, 1932

Oil on canvas, 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 in.

The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum,
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey,
New Brunswick. Gift of the Artist



2

Still Life, 1937

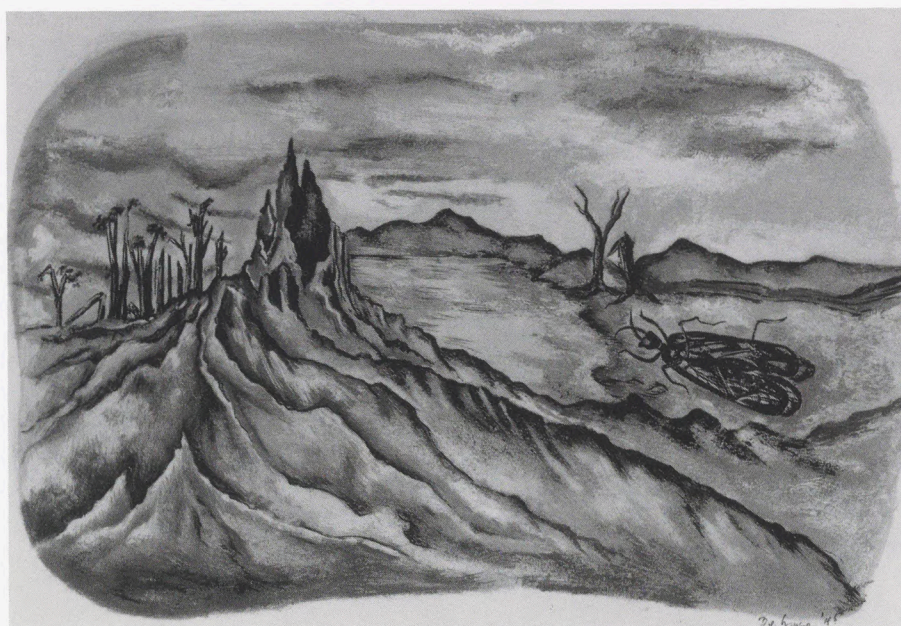
Oil on canvas, 31 x 21¼ in.



3

Landscape for Cynics, 1945

Ink and gouache on paper, 8 x 11½ in.



4

Country Living (Bird of Peace), 1946

Ink on paper, 11¼ x 15½ in.



5

Desert, 1948

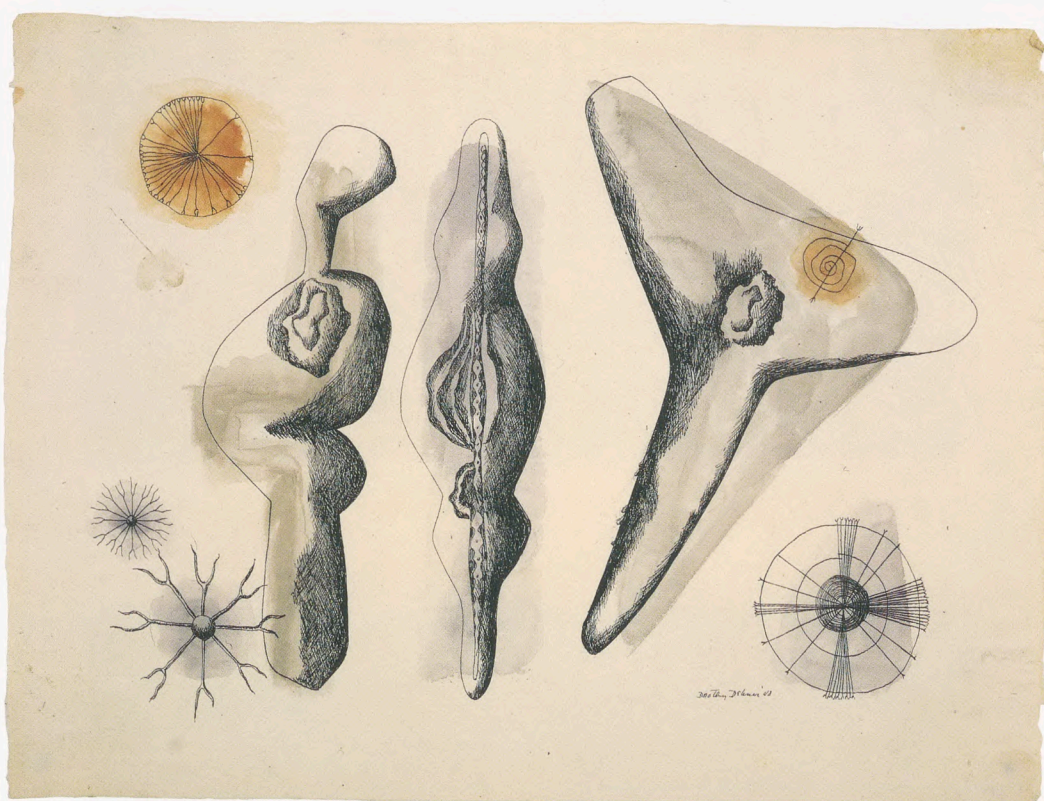
Gouache and ink on paper, 11½ x 15½ in.

6

Finger of Winter, 1948

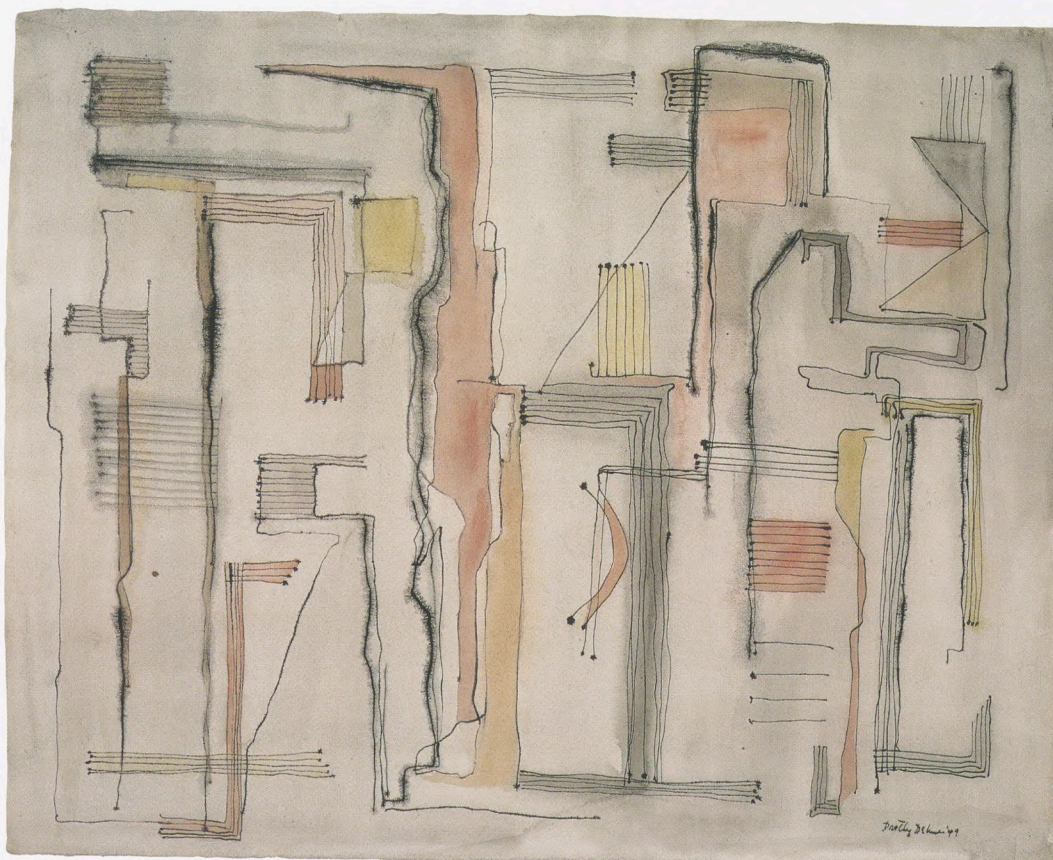
Gouache and ink on Japanese paper, 13¼ x 17¼ in.





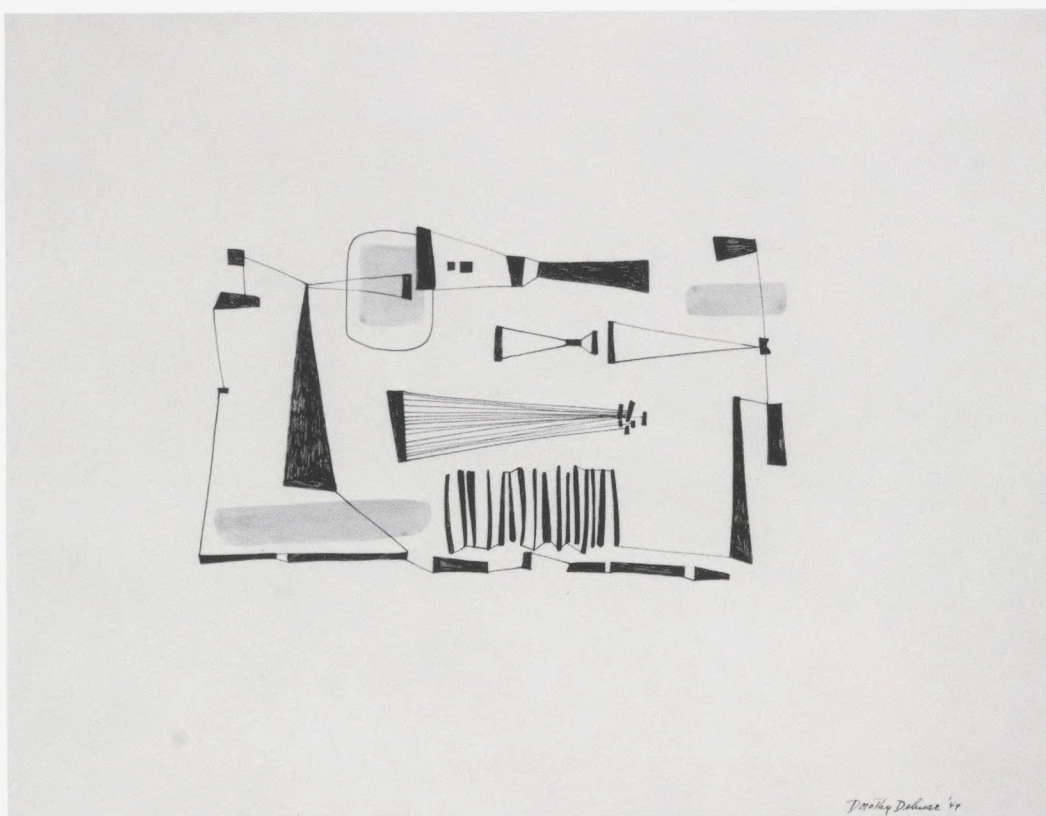
Untitled, 1949

Pen and watercolor on paper, 18 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.



Untitled, 1949

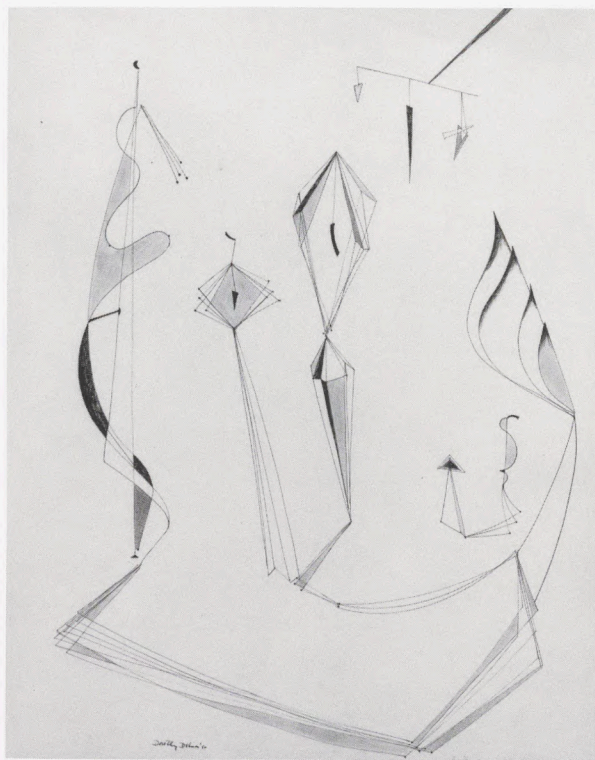
Silver wash and ink on paper, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.



IO

Artist and Model, 1950

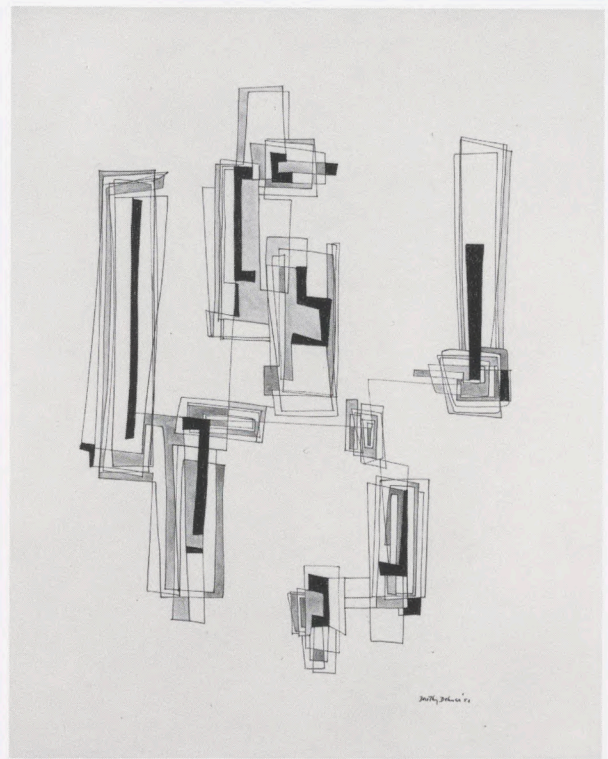
Ink and silver paint, 23 x 18¾ in.



II

Compulsion, 1952

Silver wash, pen and ink, 22¾ x 18 in.

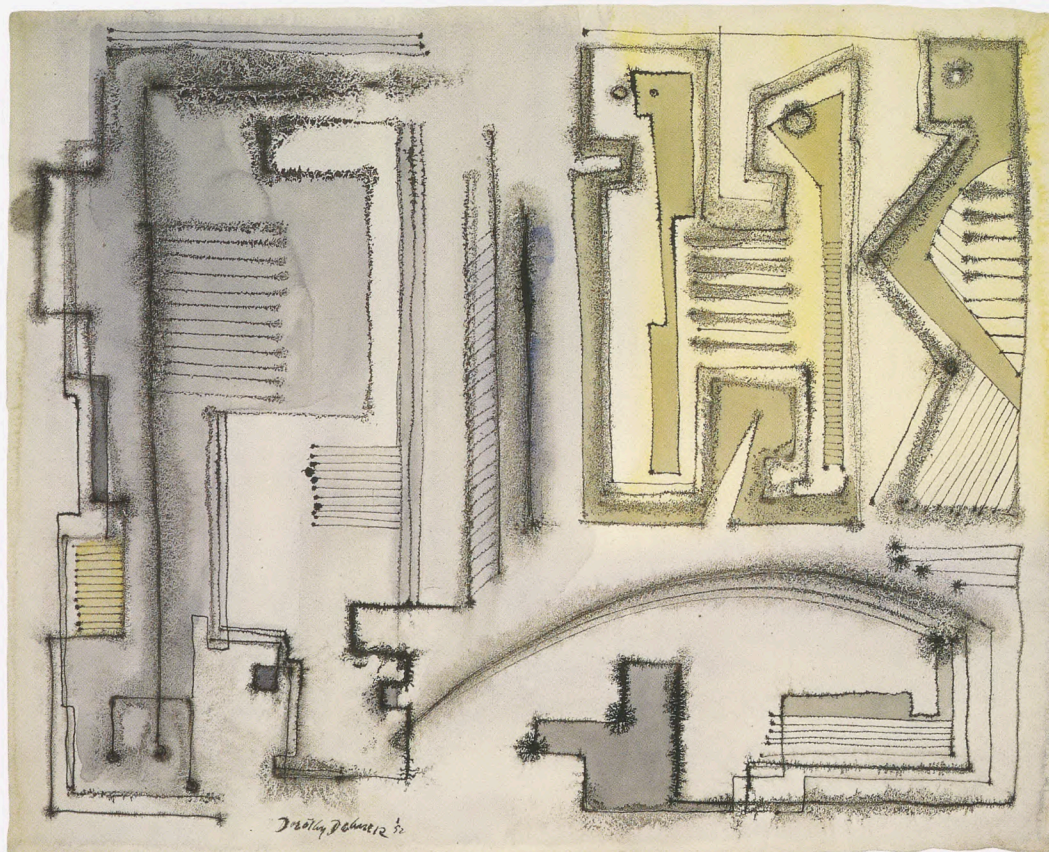


*Untitled, 1951*Oilstick on paper, 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.

13

Untitled, 1952

Watercolor and ink on paper, 18¼ x 22¼ in.



14

Untitled Five Figures, 1952
Gouache on paper, 18 x 22½ in.



15

Untitled, 1952
Ink and silver wash on paper, 20¼ x 16 in.



I6

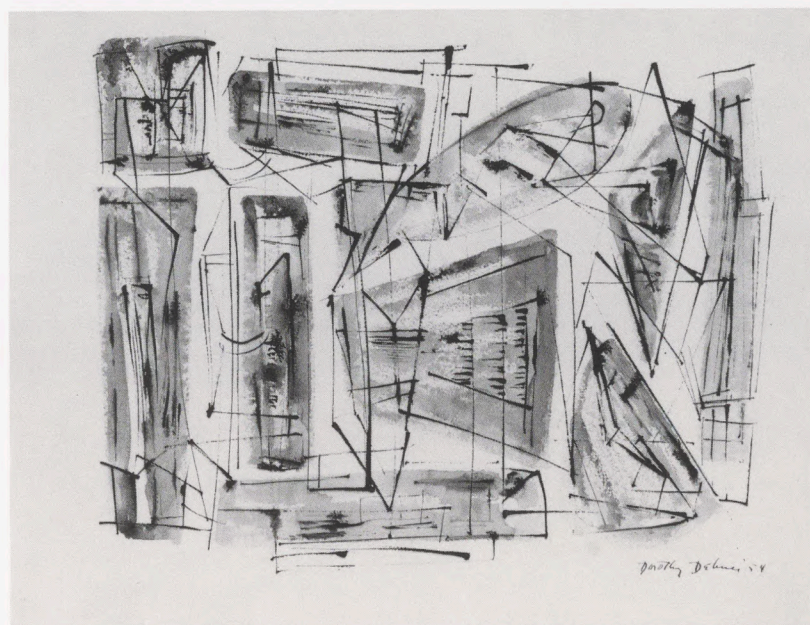
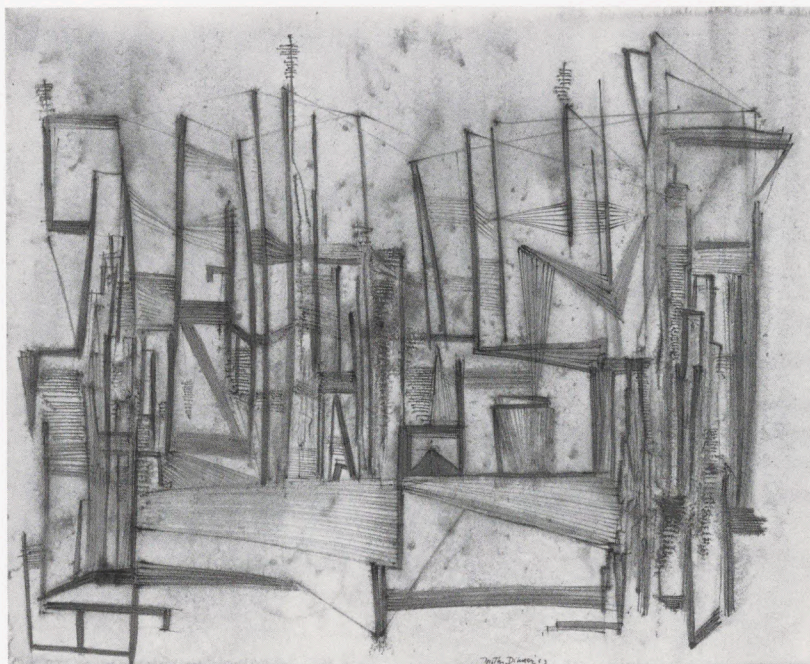
Untitled, 1953

Watercolor and ink on paper, 18 x 22¼ in.

I7

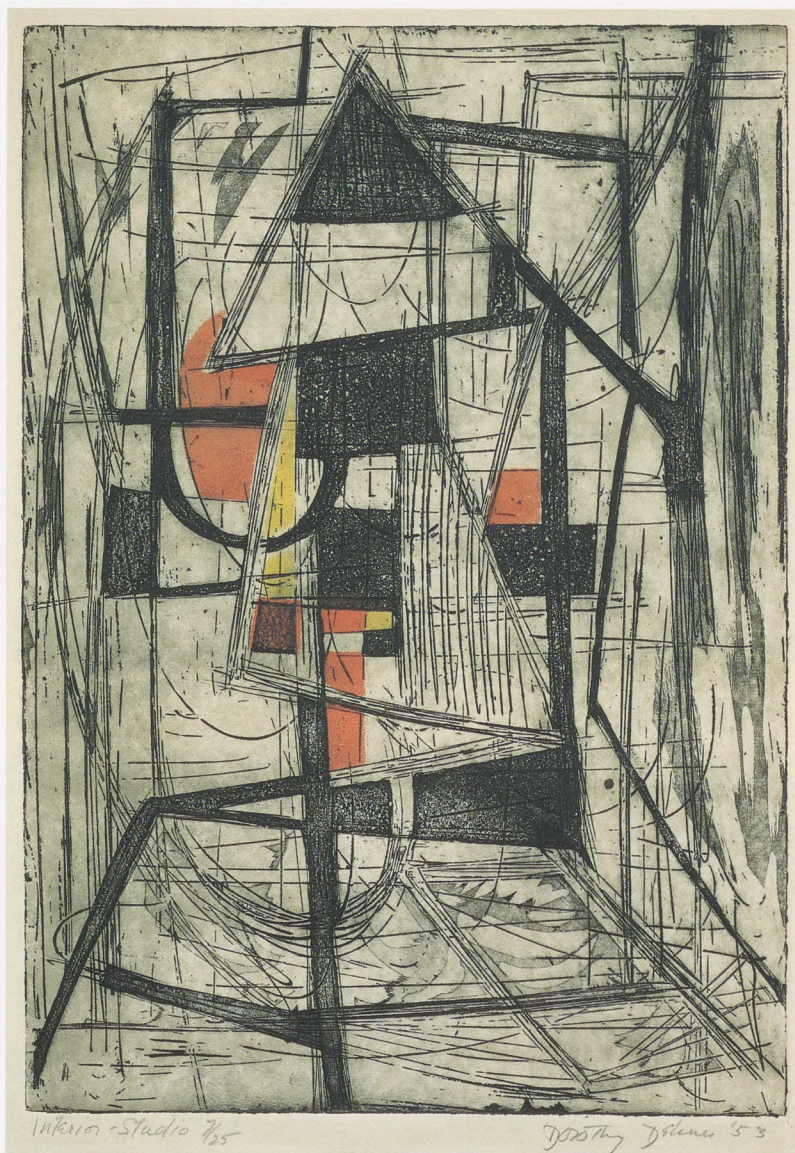
Letter, 1954

Ink on paper, 15½ x 20¾ in.



Interior Studio, 1953

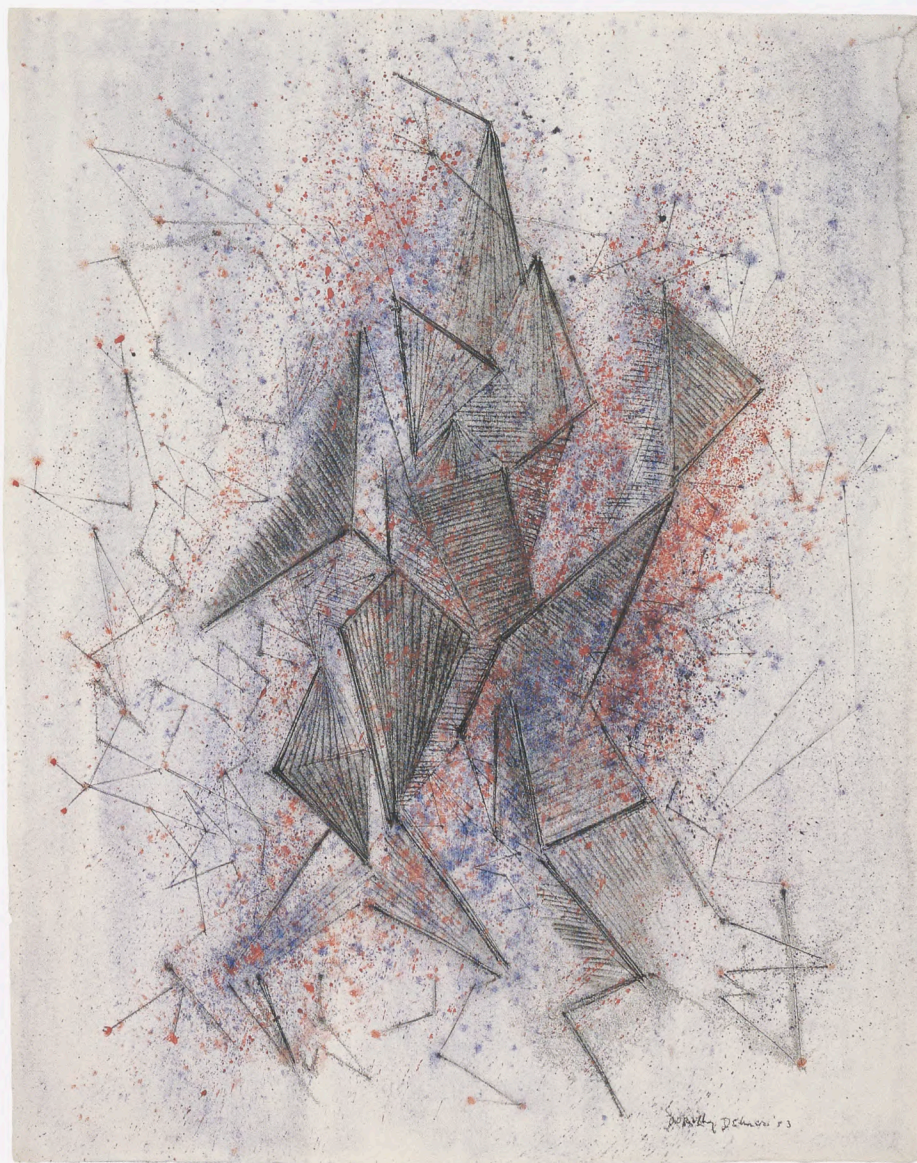
Etching and aquatint printed in black and red, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York



19

New City, 1953

Watercolor and ink on paper, 22¾ x 18 in.



20

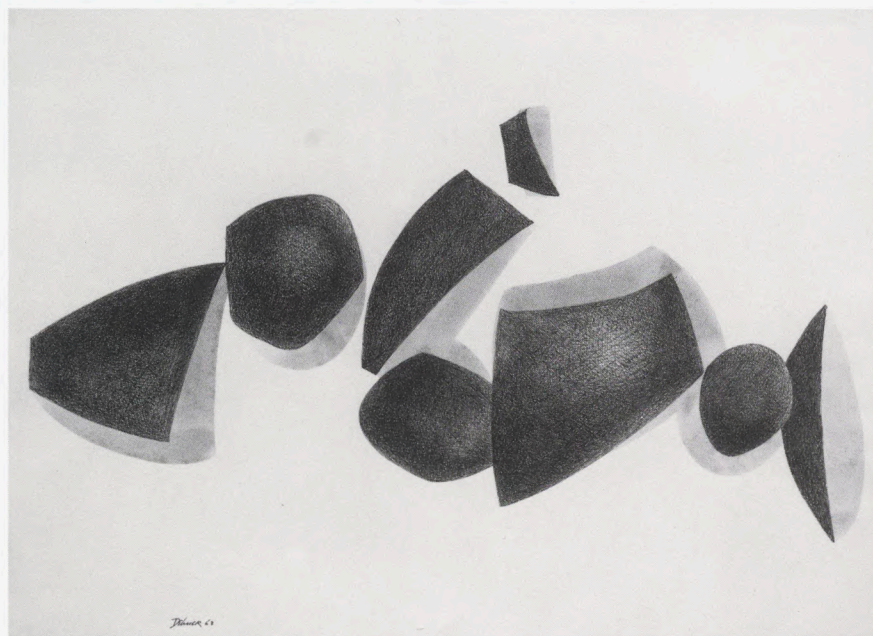
Woman, 1954

Ink and watercolor on paper, 22 x 18 in.

21

Rock Slide, 1963

Ink on paper, 22½ x 30¼ in.



22

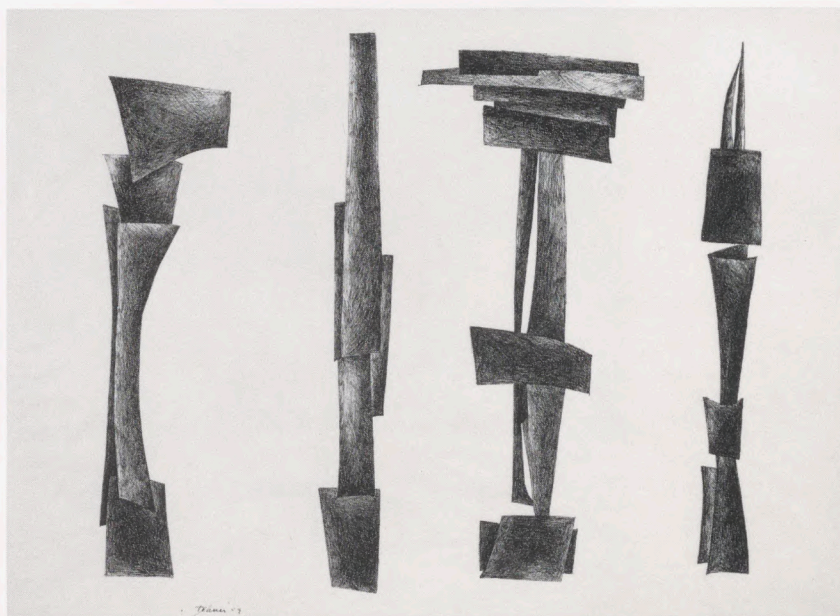
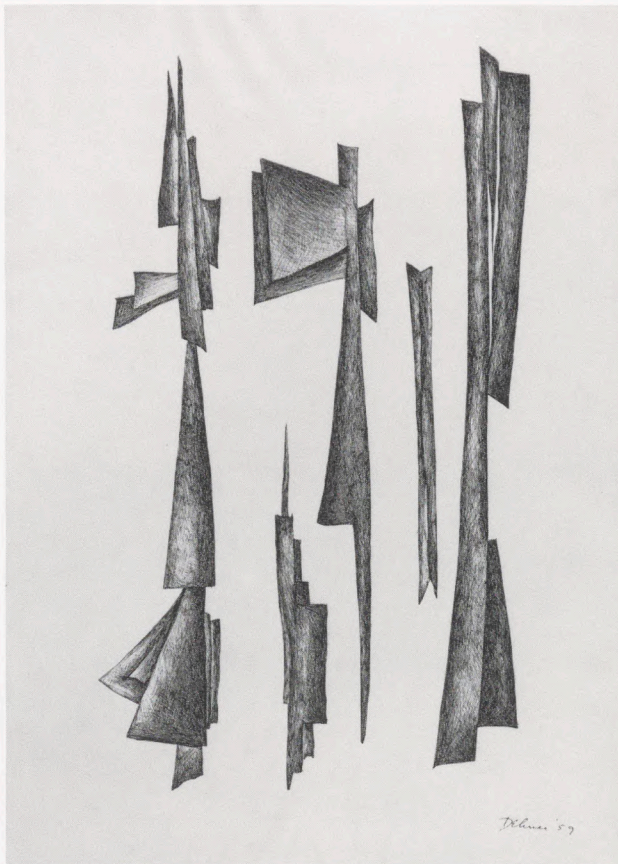
Untitled, 1959

Ink on paper, 22 x 30¼ in.

23

Untitled, 1959

Ink on paper, 29⅞ x 22 in.



24

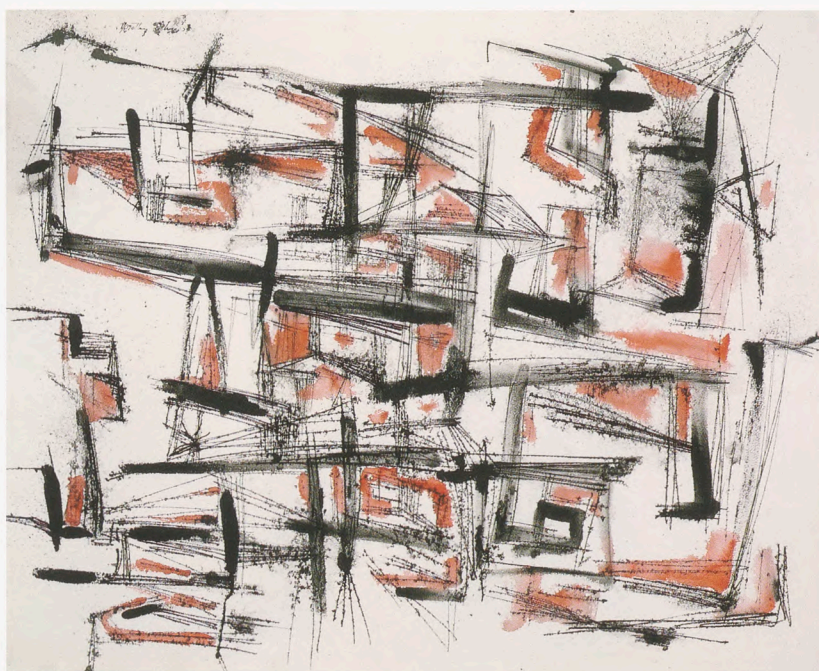
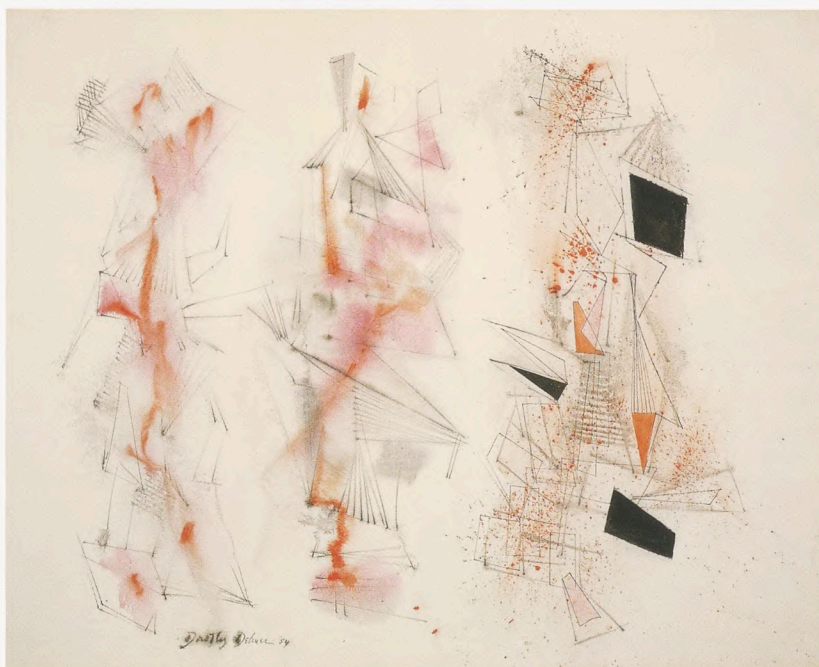
Three Figures, 1954

Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

25

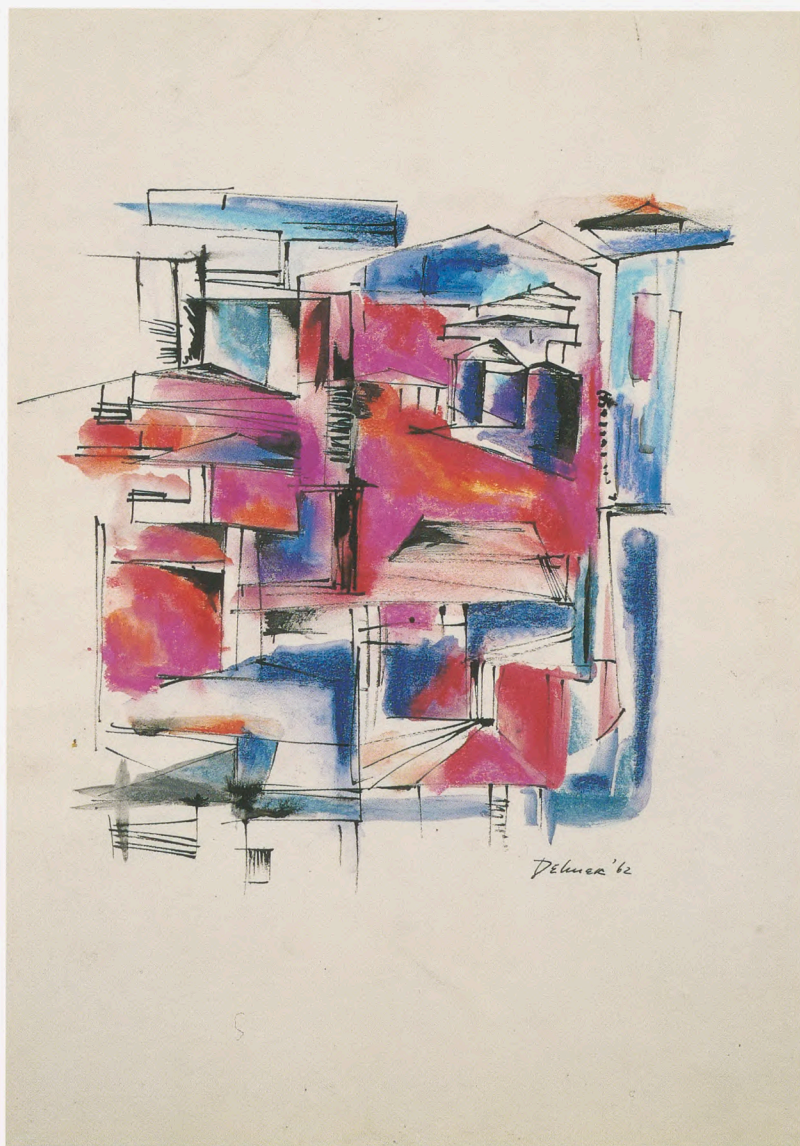
Untitled, 1955

Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.



Untitled, 1962

Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 x 12¼ in.



Town and Country, 1971

Lithograph on paper, 24 x 34 in.

University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

The Tamarind Archive Collection

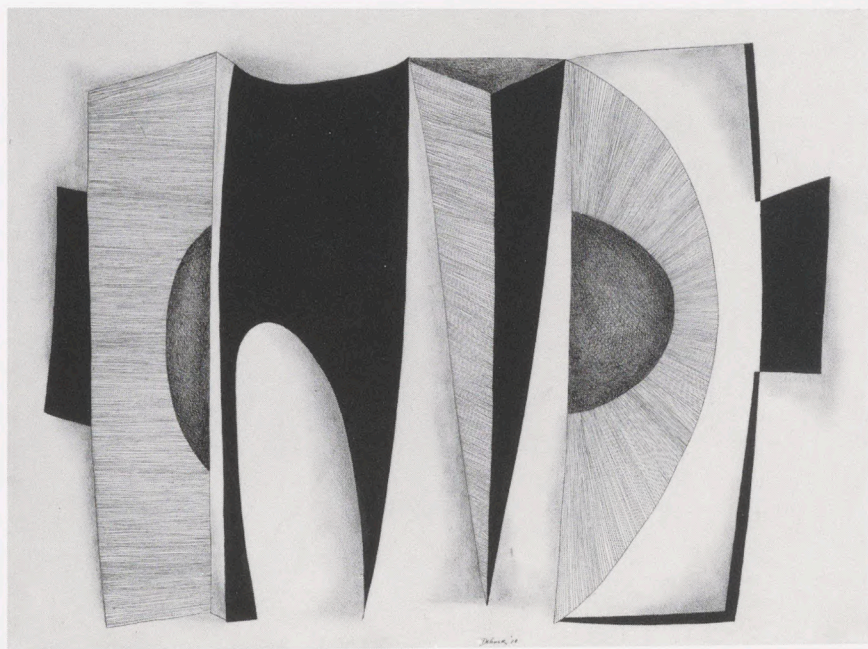


28

Dark Harmony, 1983
Ink on paper, 22¼ x 18 in.

29

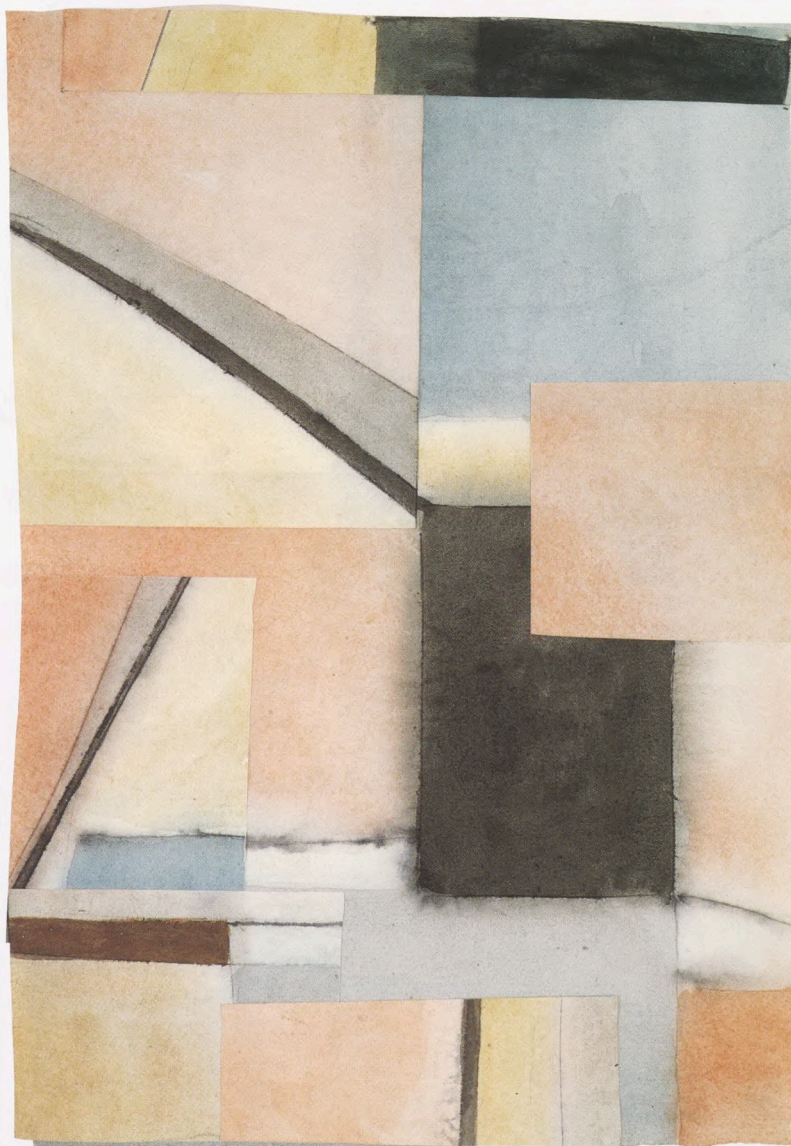
Untitled, 1978 (study for sculpture *Chopiniana*)
Charcoal, pen and ink on paper, 22¼ x 30½ in.





31

Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1986 (collage)
Watercolor on paper, 12¼ x 8½ in.



32

Signpost, 1956
Bronze, 12 x 5½ x 4½ in.



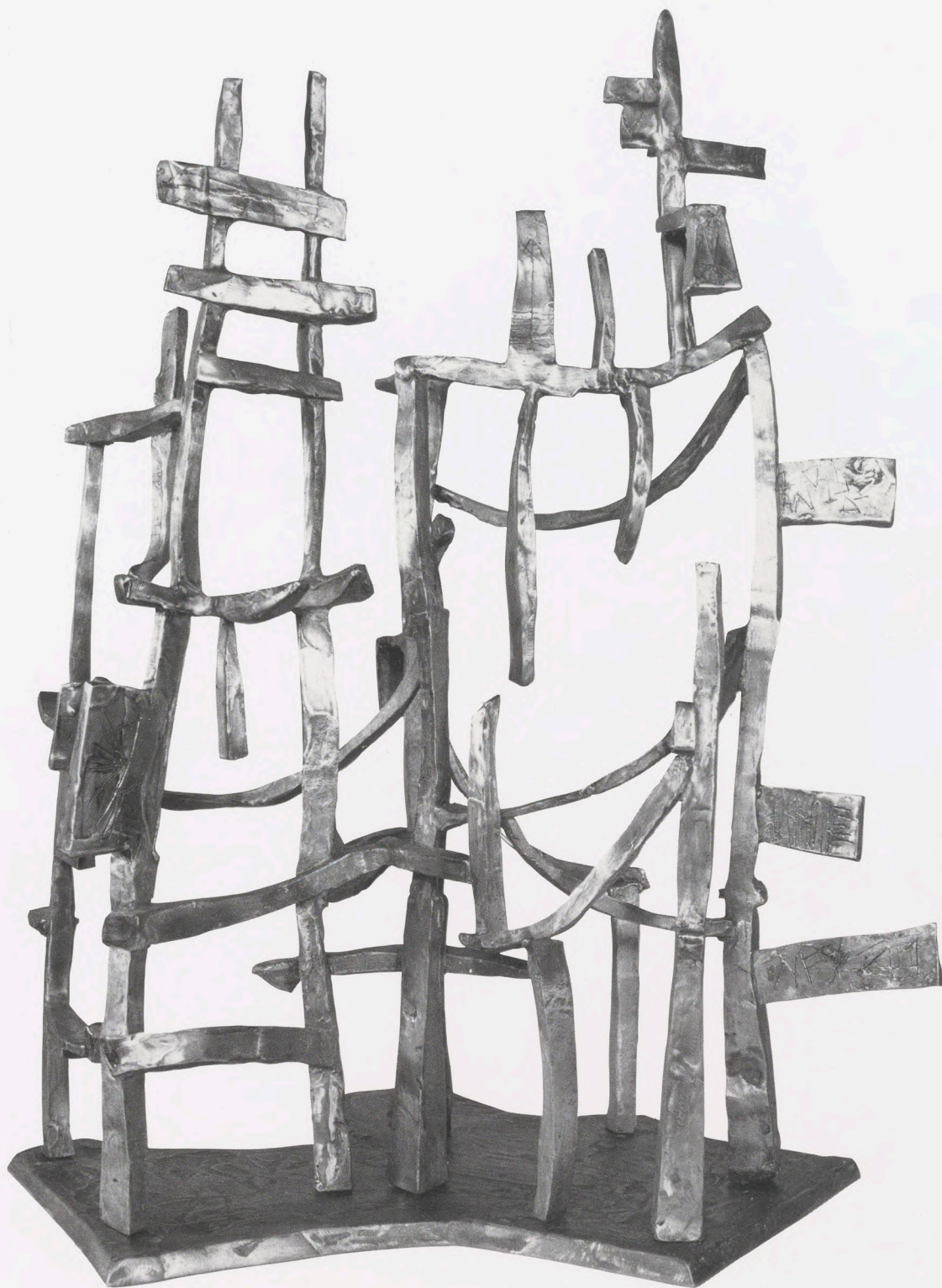
33

Jacob's Ladder #1, 1957
Bronze, 16¼ x 8⅞ x 5⅞ in.
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Smithsonian Institution
Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966



34

Torgate, 1957
Bronze, 16¼ x 12½ x 9 in.

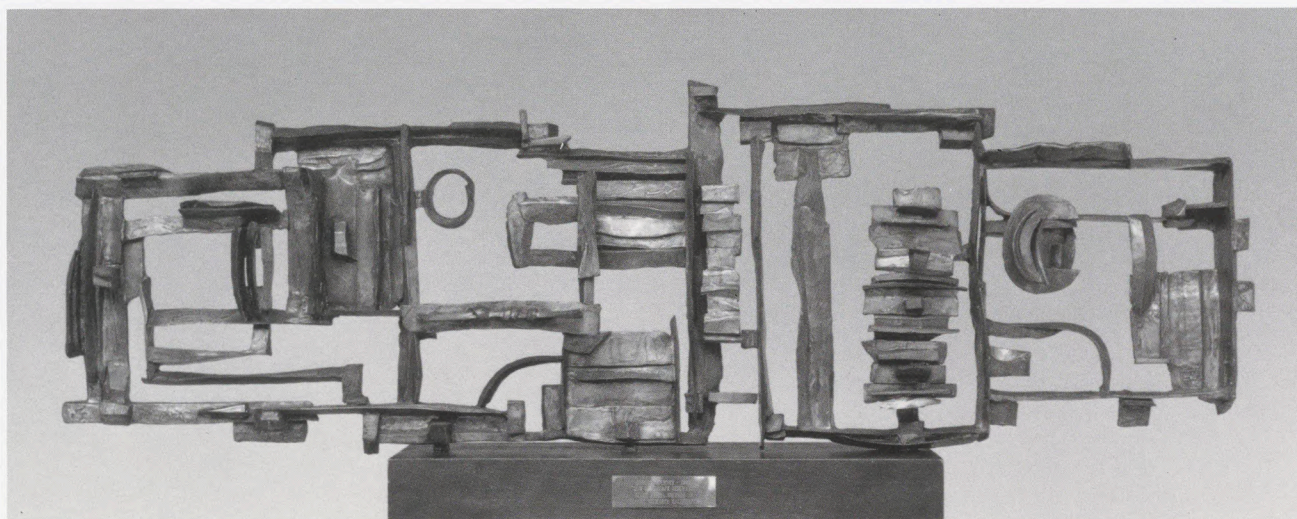
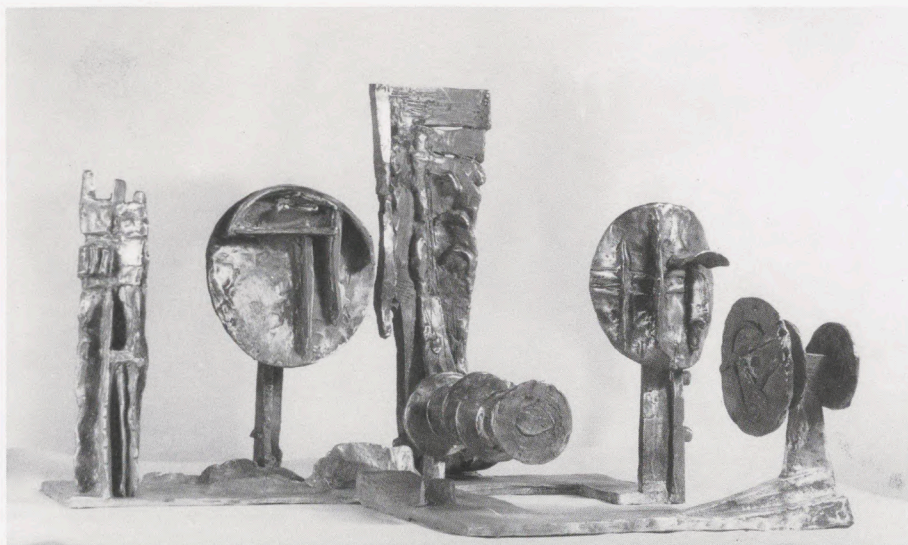


35

Reliquary Kingdom #2, 1958
Bronze, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.

36

Low Landscape Sideways, 1962
Bronze, 18 x 48 x 6 in.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York



37

Queen, 1960

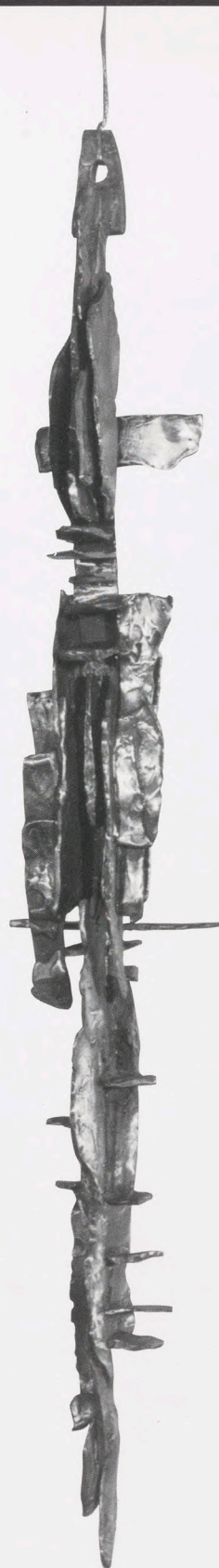
Bronze, 40 x 8 x 7¼ in.



38

Untitled (Hanging Sculpture), 1960

Bronze, 45 x 7 x 5 in.

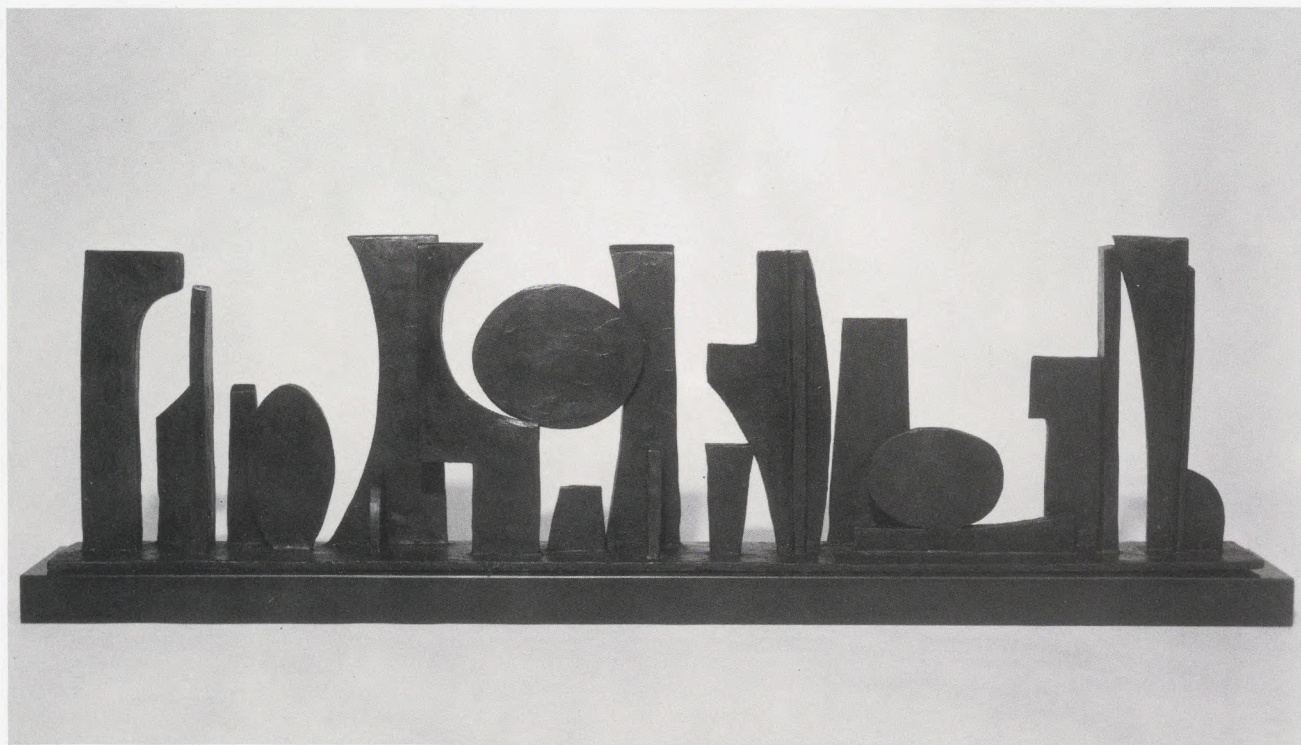


39

Wellfleet #3, 1968
Bronze, 22¼ x 15 in.

40

Egyptian Theme, 1969
Bronze, 13 x 42 x 5½ in.



41

Encounter (Six pieces arranged in cluster), 1969

Bronze, 50 x 8 in. diameter base

39½ x 5 in. diameter base

38 x 4½ in. square base

40½ x 6½ in. diameter base

28 x 4¾ in. diameter base

14½ x 5½ x 4 in. no base



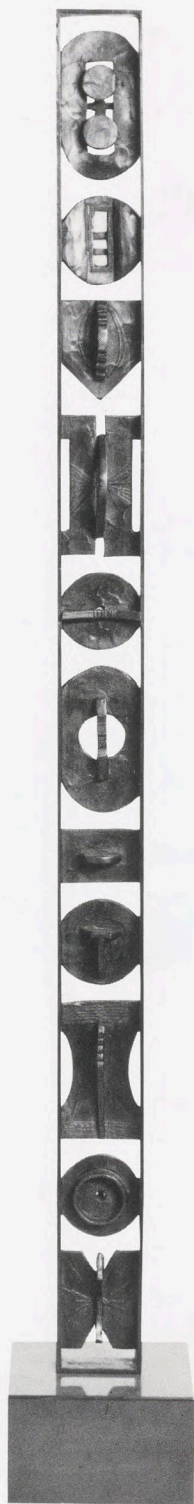


Looking North F, 1964
Bronze, 18 x 64½ x 3 in.
(detail left)



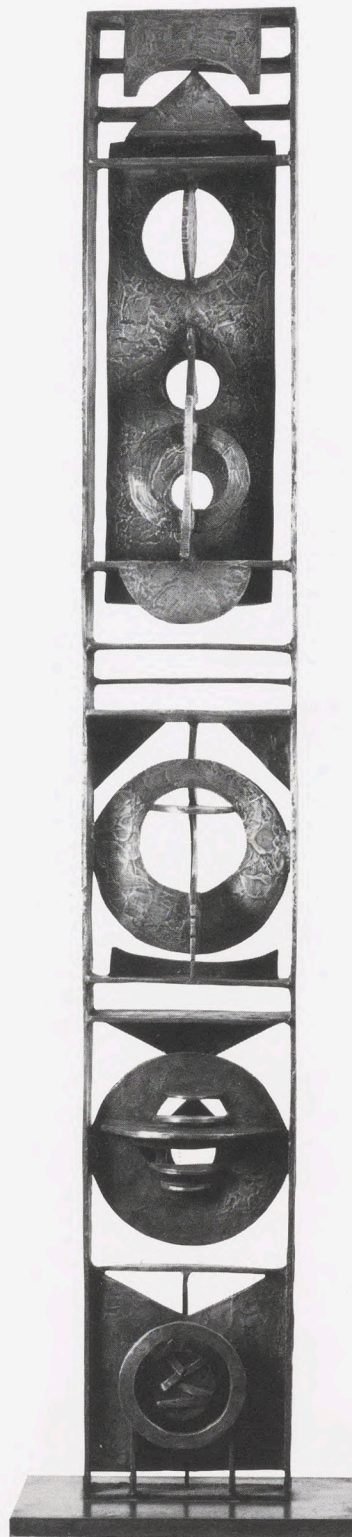
43

Cenotaph for Li Po, 1971
Bronze, 42 x 2¼ x 1 in.



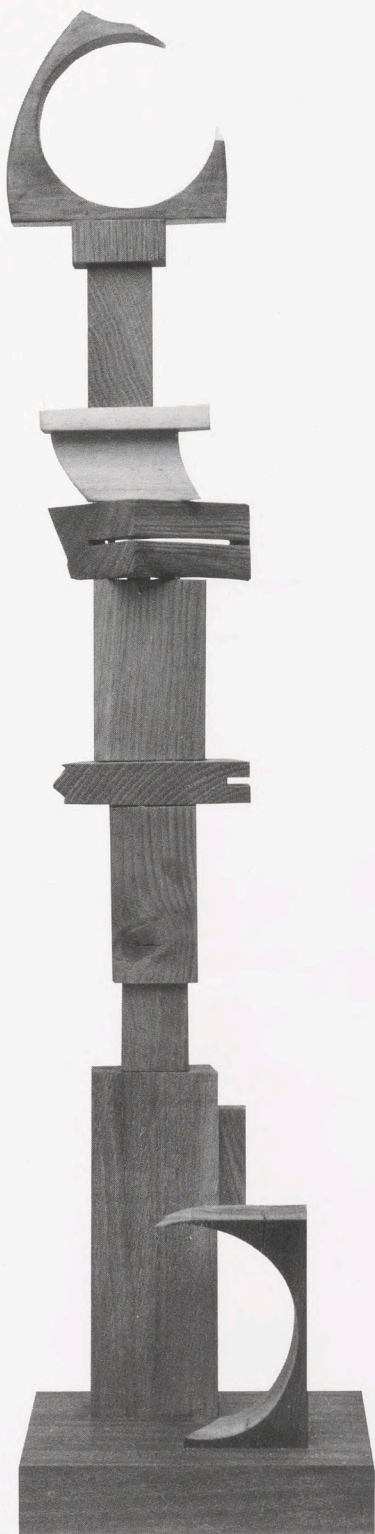
44

Egyptian King, 1972
Bronze, 65½ x 14½ x 12 in.



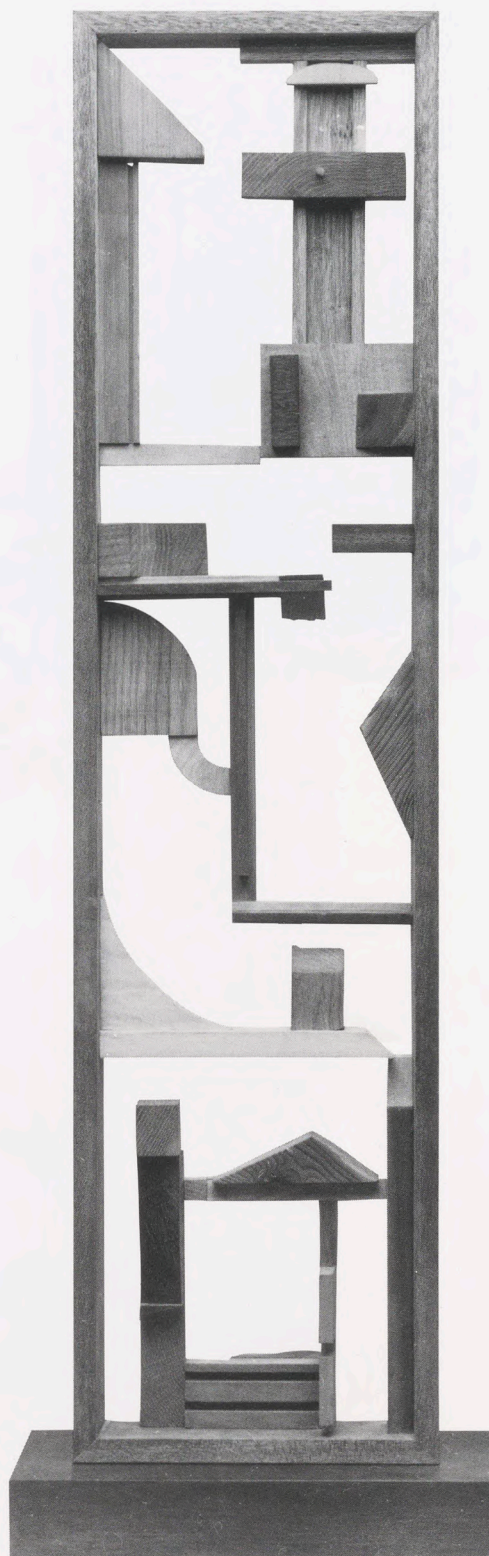
45

Sentry I (also called *Minotaur*), 1978
Various woods, 32 x 6 x 3 in.



46

Window with View, 1979
Various woods, 50 3/4 x 16 x 7 in.
The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers,
The State University of New Jersey
Gift of the artist



47

Scaffold, 1986

Corten steel, 101 x 29 x 12 in.

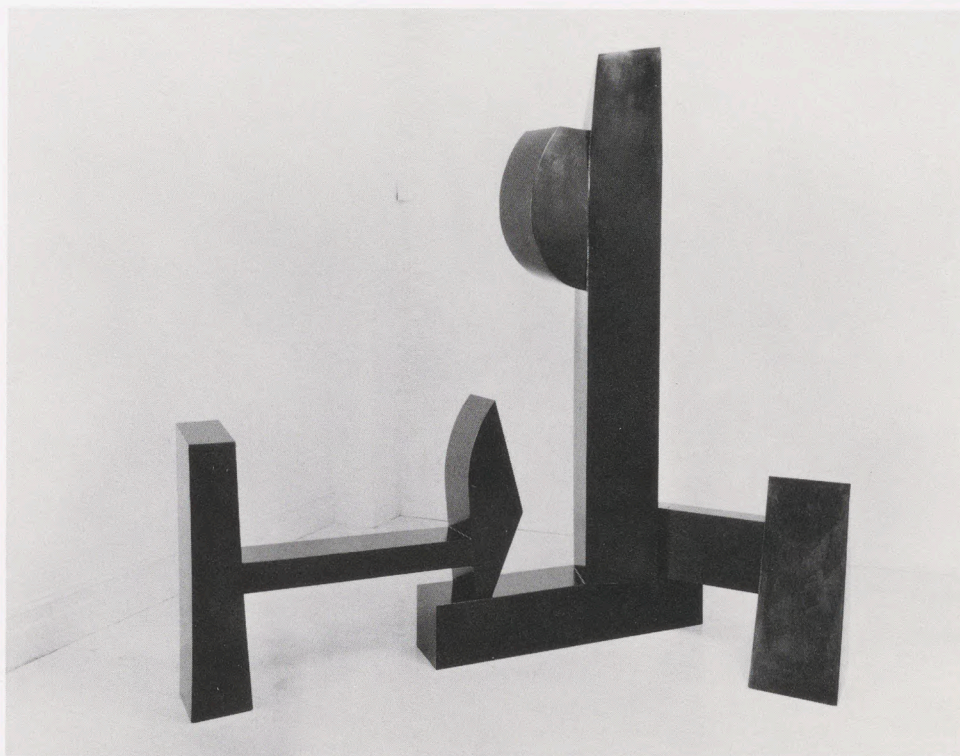
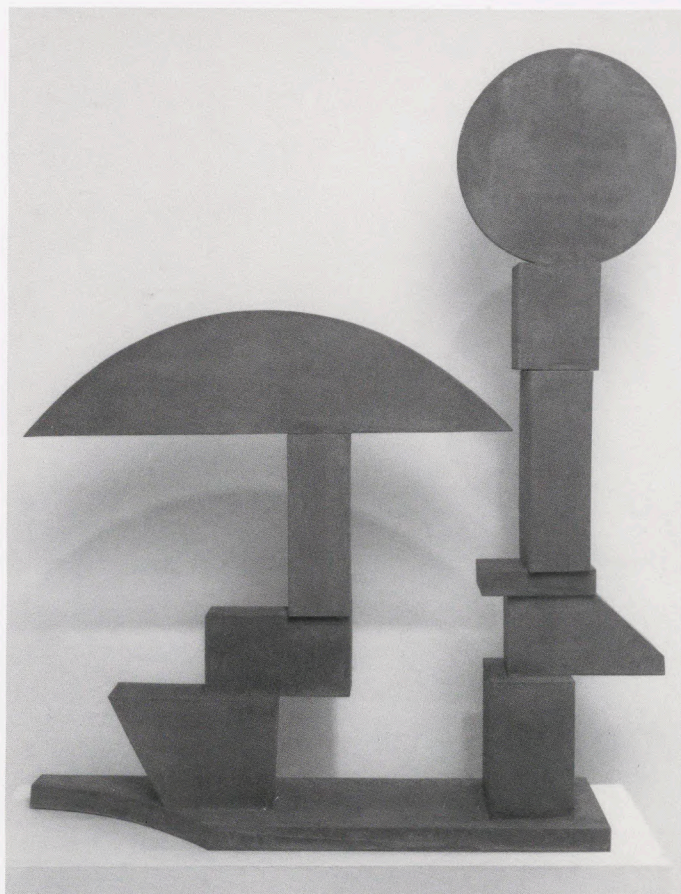


48

Couple, 1988
Corten steel, 55 x 48 x 12 in.

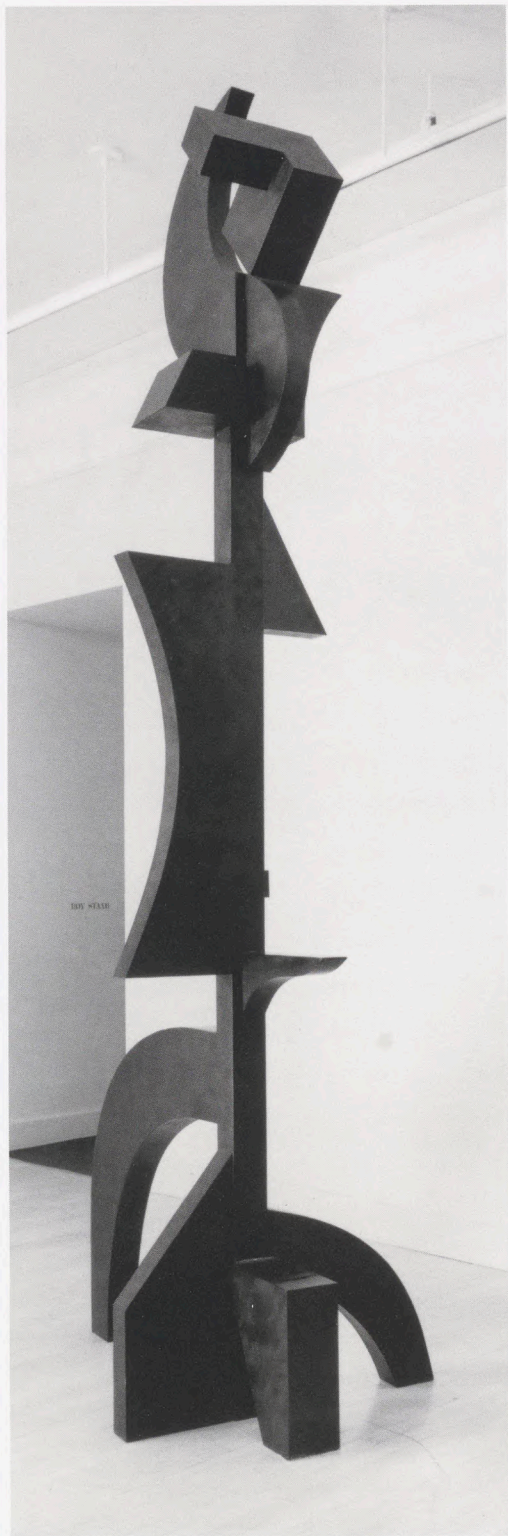
49

Prelude and Fugue, 1989
Fabricated steel, 99 x 103 x 33 in.



50

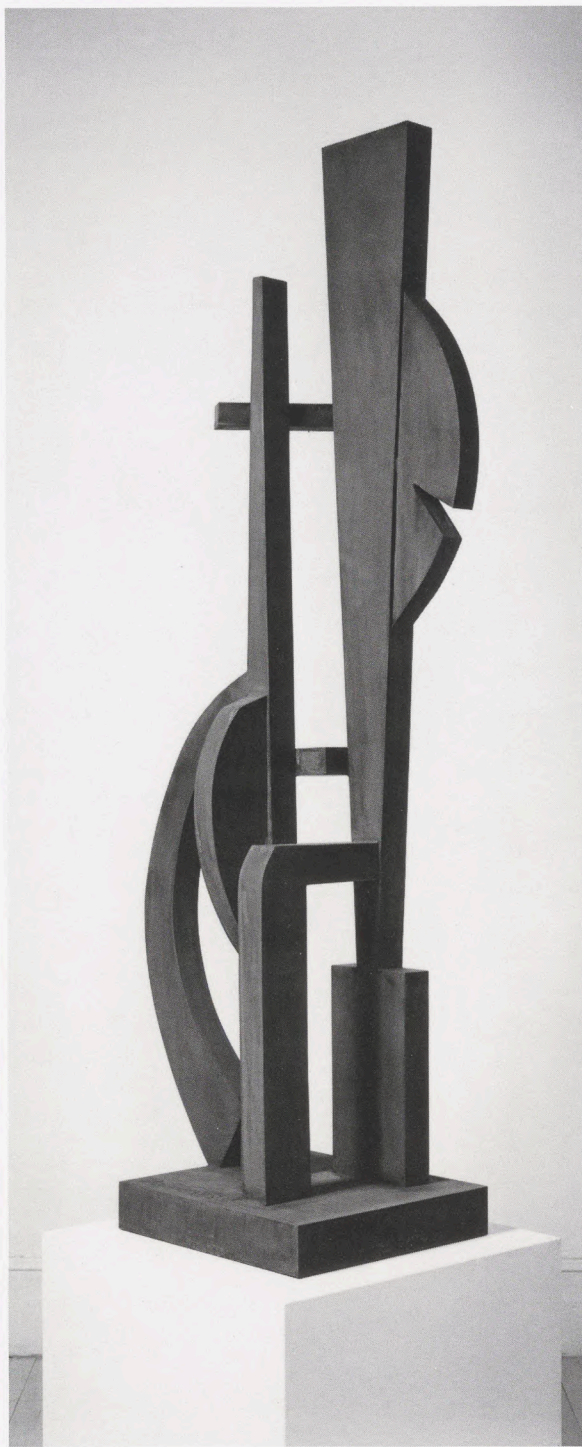
Encounter, 1987
Fabricated steel, 144 in. high



50

51

Sancho Panza, 1989
Corten steel, 74 x 28 x 17 in.

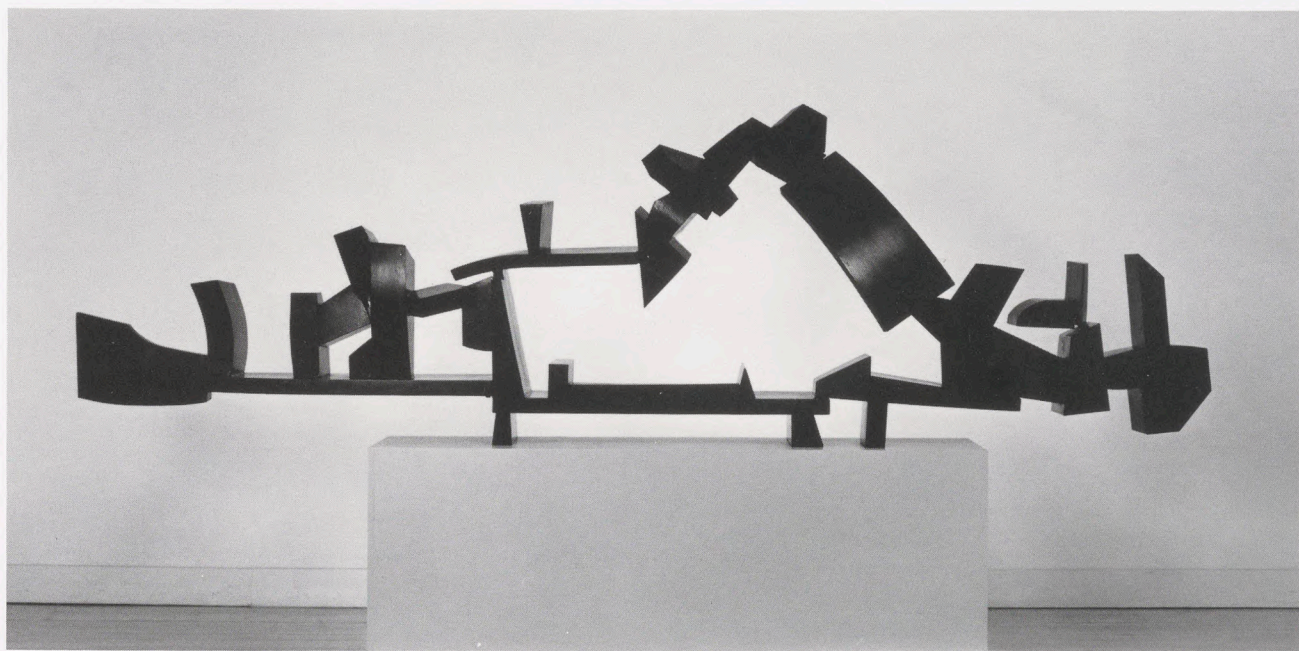
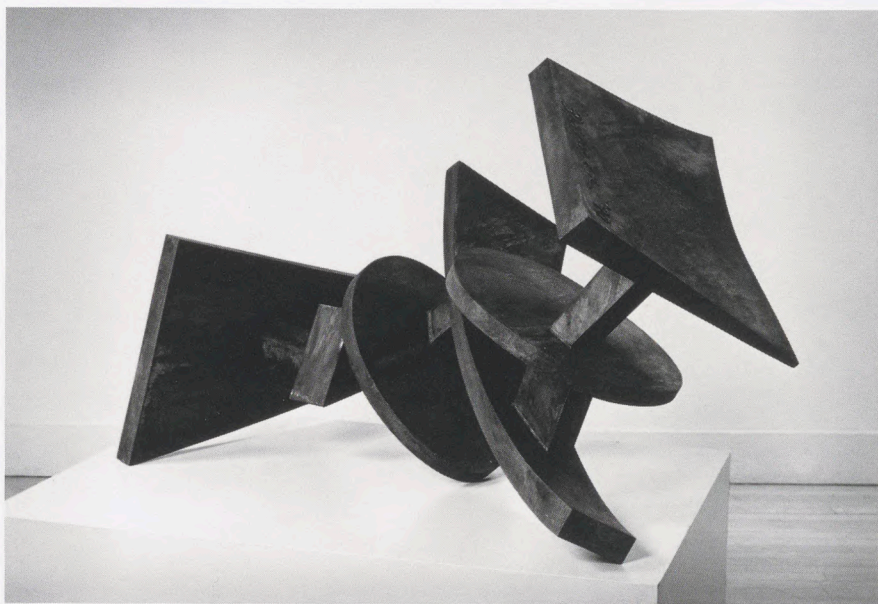


52

Demeter's Harrow, 1990
Corten steel, 28 x 48 x 32 in.

53

Breakwater, 1990
Fabricated steel, black paint, 55 x 148 x 30 in.



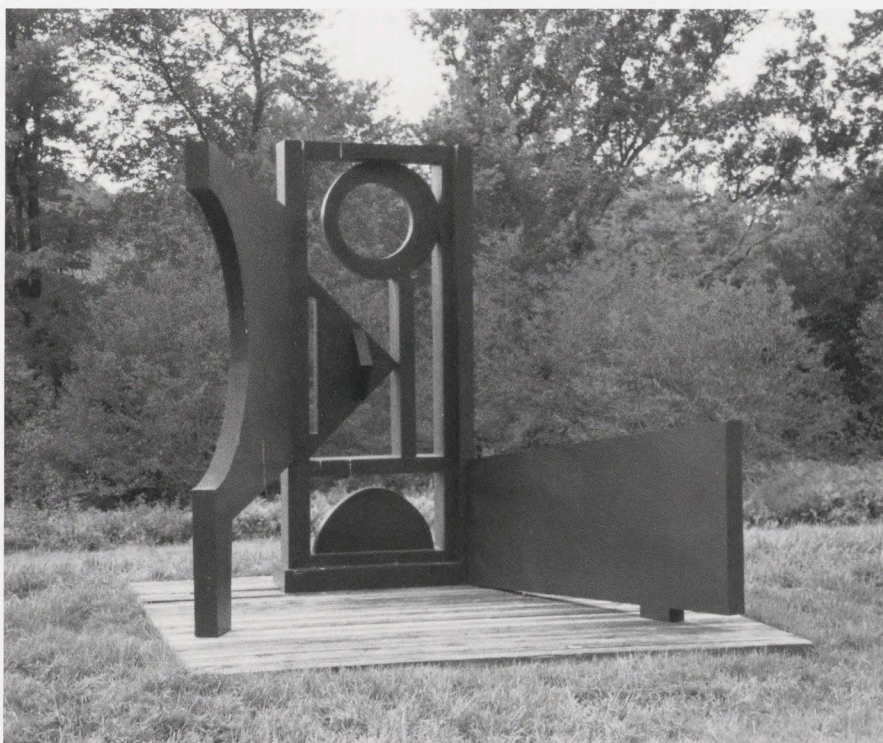
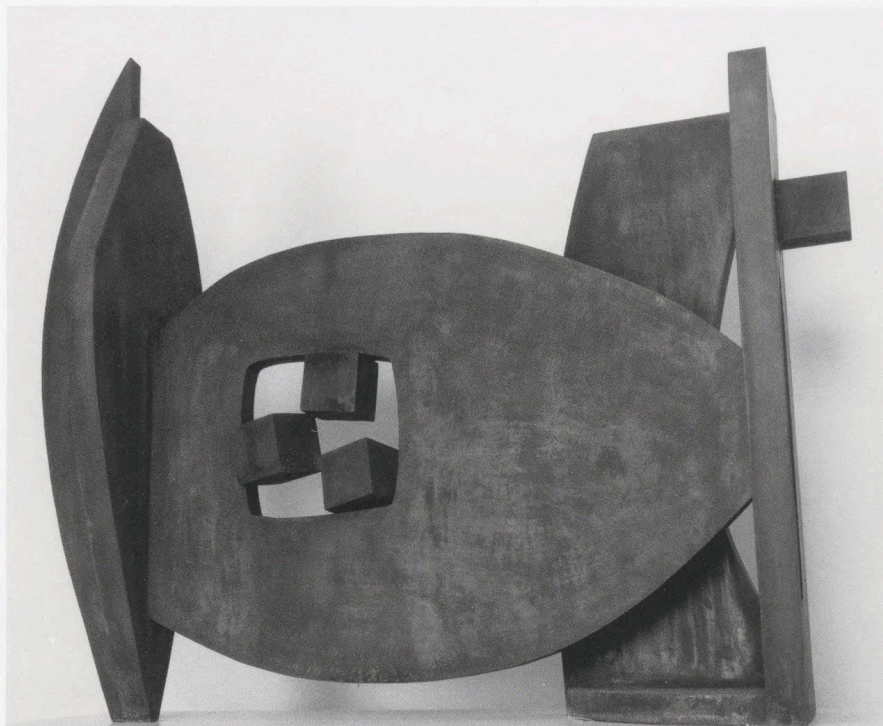


55

Sanctum with Window I, 1990
Fabricated steel, 40 x 48 x 13 in.

56

Sanctum with Window II, 1990-1991
Painted aluminum, 150 x 156 x 126 in.



57

Stretcher Series I, 1992

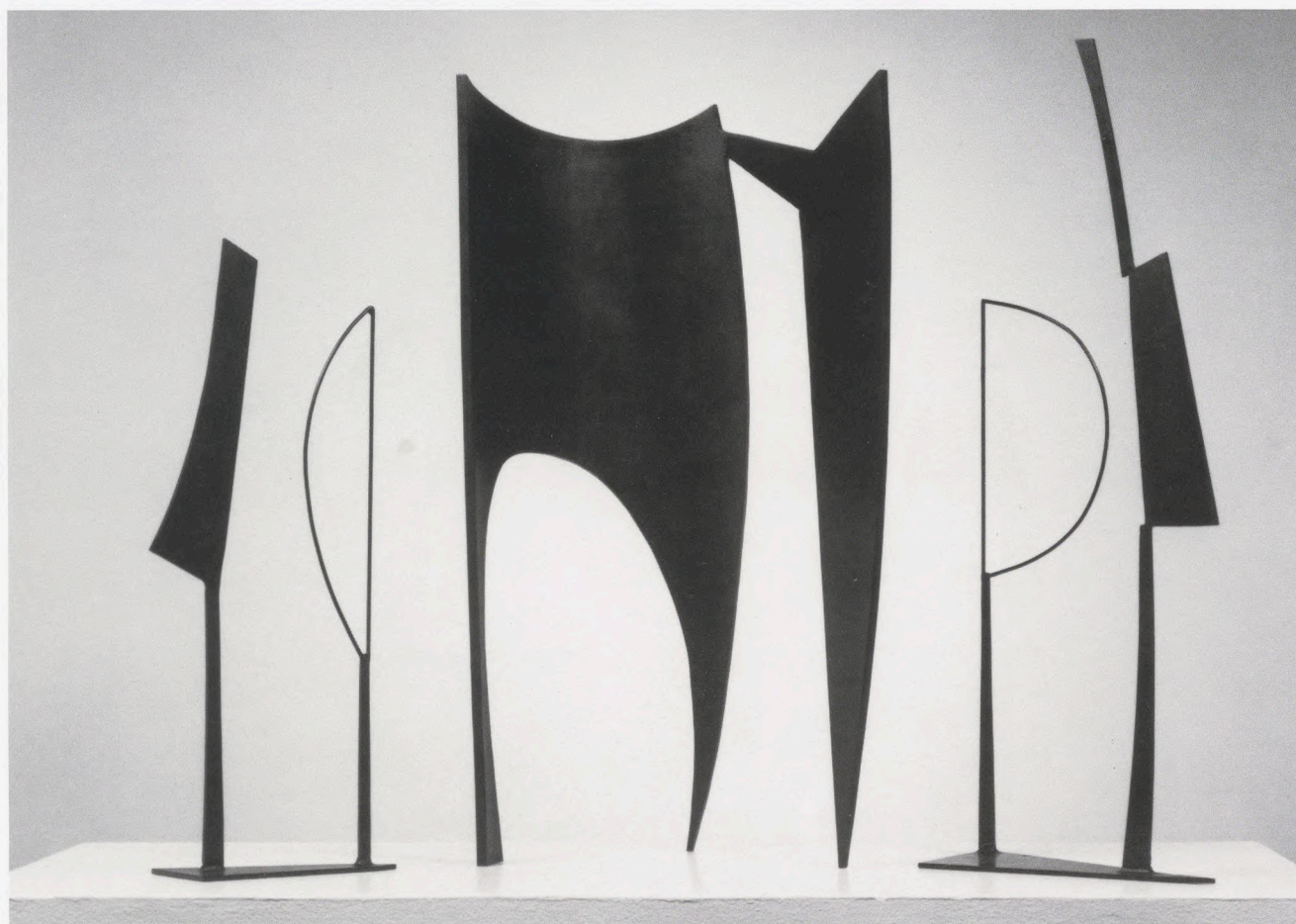
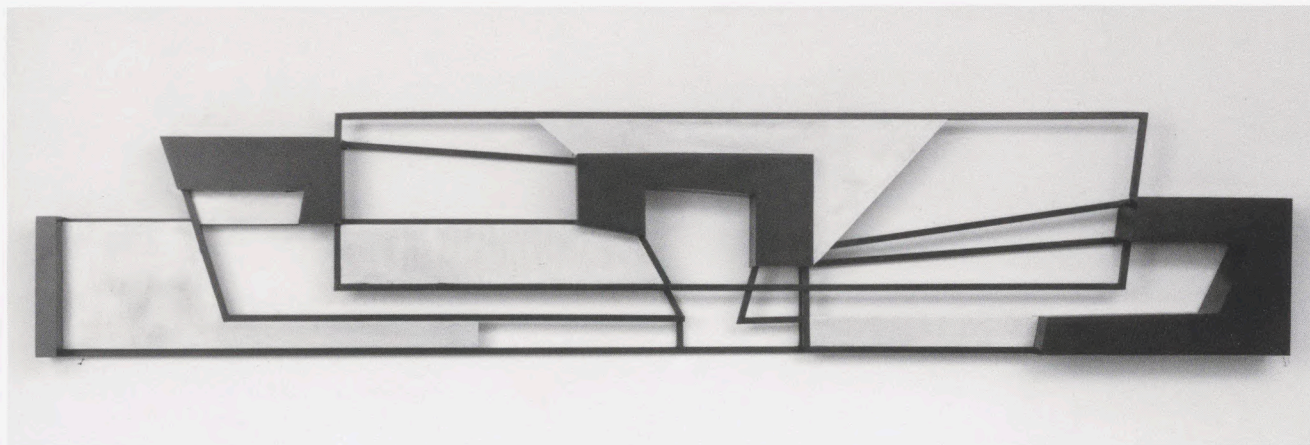
Painted aluminum, 18¾ x 94 x 4½ in.

58

Chopiniana (three pieces), 1992

Painted aluminum and steel, 23¼ x 9 x 3½ in.

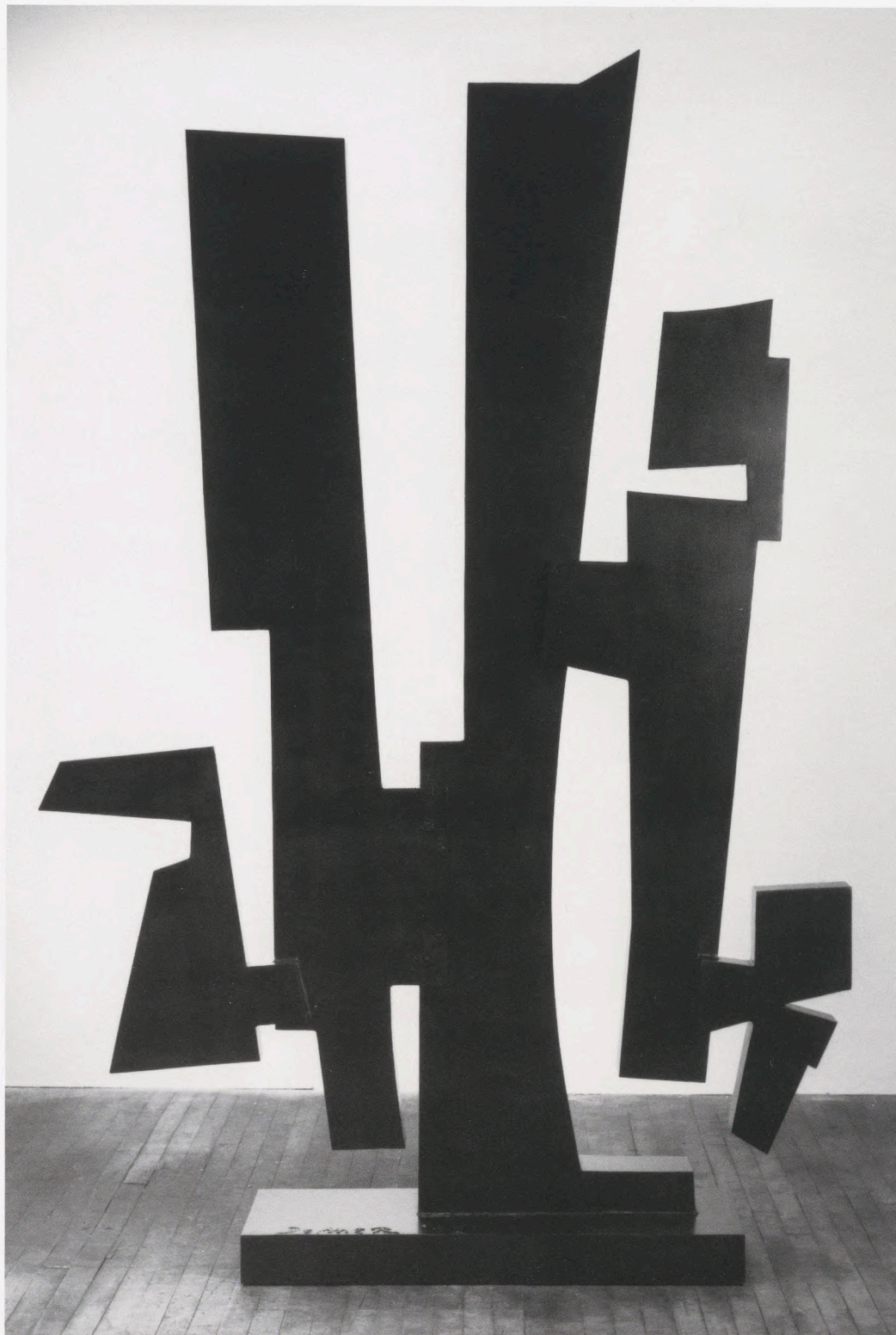
29¼ x 16 x 9 in. 30¼ x 12 x 5¼ in.



59

Dark Harmony, 1992

Fabricated steel, 98 x 60 x 4½ in.



Lenders to the Exhibition

Dorothy Dehner

André Emmerich Gallery, New York

Alice and Nathan Gantcher

Wilder Green

John and Judith Hannan

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.

The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York

Dr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Kahn

Longhouse Foundation, Easthampton, New York

Marc Osborne and Marcia Marquis

Perimeter Gallery, Chicago

Private Collections

Warren M. Robbins

Edward and Julie Saviano

The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, IN

Twining Fine Art, New York

University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University
of New Jersey, New Brunswick

Checklist of the Exhibition

Unless otherwise noted, all works are courtesy of the artist and Twining Fine Art, New York.

Height precedes width precedes depth.

Paintings, Drawings, and Prints

Still Life, 1932

Oil on canvas, 20¼ x 16 in.
Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum,
Rutgers, The State University of New
Jersey, New Brunswick. Gift of
Dorothy Dehner
(plate 1)

Still Life, 1937

Oil on canvas, 31 x 21¼ in.
Private Collection
(plate 2)

Landscape for Cynics, 1945

Ink and gouache on paper, 8 x 11½ in.
(plate 3)

Country Living (Bird of Peace), 1946

Ink on paper, 11¼ x 15½ in.
(plate 4)

Desert, 1948

Gouache and ink on paper, 11½ x 15½ in.
(plate 5)

Finger of Winter, 1948

Gouache and ink on Japanese paper
13¼ x 17¼ in.
(plate 6)

Star Cage, 1949

Ink and wash on paper, 18¼ x 22¾ in.
The Snite Museum of Art, University of
Notre Dame, IN. Gift of the American
Academy of Arts and Letters
(pg. 10)

Virgin Island Series, 1948

Ink and gouache on paper, 13 x 17½ in.
(plate 7)

Untitled, 1949

Silver wash and ink on paper
15¼ x 20¼ in.
(plate 9)

Untitled, 1949

Pen and watercolor on paper
18½ x 22¾ in.
(plate 8)

Artist and Model, 1950

Ink and silver paint, 23 x 18¼ in.
(plate 10)

Untitled, 1951

Oilstick on paper, 15¼ x 20¼ in.
(plate 12)

Compulsion, 1952

Silver wash, pen and ink, 22¼ x 18 in.
(plate 11)

Untitled Five Figures, 1952

Gouache on paper, 18 x 22½ in.
Collection of Marc Osborne and
Marcia Marquis
(plate 14)

Untitled, 1952

Ink and silver wash on paper, 20¼ x 16 in.
(plate 15)

Untitled, 1952

Watercolor and ink on paper
18¼ x 22¾ in.
(plate 13)

Interior Studio, 1953

Etching and aquatint printed in black and
red, 13½ x 9¼ in.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls,
New York
(plate 18)

New City, 1953

Watercolor and ink on paper, 22¾ x 18 in.
(plate 19)

Untitled, 1953

Watercolor and ink on paper, 18 x 22¾ in.
(plate 16)

Letter, 1954

Ink on paper, 15½ x 20¾ in.
(plate 17)

Three Figures, 1954

Ink and watercolor on paper
18¼ x 22¾ in.
(plate 24)

Woman, 1954

Ink and watercolor on paper, 22 x 18 in.
(plate 20)

Untitled, 1955

Ink and watercolor on paper
18¼ x 22¾ in.
(plate 25)

Untitled, 1959

Ink on paper, 22 x 30¼ in.
Collection of Warren M. Robbins
(plate 22)

Untitled, 1959

Ink on paper, 29½ x 22 in.
(plate 23)

Untitled, 1962

Ink and watercolor on paper, 18 x 12¼ in.
(plate 26)

Rock Slide, 1963

Ink on paper, 22½ x 30¼ in.
(plate 21)

Town and Country, 1971

Lithograph on paper, 24 x 34 in.
University Art Museum, University of
New Mexico, Albuquerque
The Tamarind Archive Collection
(plate 27)

Untitled, 1978 (study for sculpture *Chopiniana*)

Charcoal, pen and ink on paper
22¾ x 30½ in.
Collection of Edward and Julie Saviano
(plate 29)

Untitled, 1980 (collage)
Color sheets and construction paper
20 x 10 in.
(plate 30)

Dark Harmony, 1983
Ink on paper, 22¼ x 18 in.
Private Collection
(plate 28)

Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1986 (collage)
Watercolor on paper, 12¼ x 8½ in.
Courtesy of Perimeter Gallery, Chicago
(plate 31)

Sculpture

Signpost, 1956
Bronze, 12 x 5½ x 4½ in.
Courtesy of John and Judith Hannan
(plate 32)

Jacob's Ladder #1, 1957
Bronze, 16¼ x 8⅞ x 5⅝ in.
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Smithsonian Institution. Gift of Joseph H.
Hirshhorn, 1966
(plate 33)

Torgate, 1957
Bronze, 16¼ x 12½ x 9 in.
(plate 34)

Reliquary Kingdom #2, 1958
Bronze, 10¾ x 16½ x 13¼ in.
Collection of Wilder Green
(plate 35)

Queen, 1960
Bronze, 40 x 8 x 7¾ in.
(plate 37)

Untitled (Hanging Sculpture), 1960
Bronze, 45 x 7 x 5 in.
(plate 38)

Low Landscape Sideways, 1962
Bronze, 18 x 48 x 6 in.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls,
New York
(plate 36)

Looking North F, 1964
Bronze, 18 x 64½ x 3 in.
(plate 42)

Wellfleet #3, 1968
Bronze, 22¼ x 15 in.
(plate 39)

Egyptian Theme, 1969
Bronze, 13 x 42 x 5½ in.
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur
E. Kahn
(plate 40)

Encounter (Six pieces arranged in cluster),
1969
Bronze, 50 x 8 in. diameter base
39½ x 5 in. diameter base
38 x 4½ in. square base

40½ x 6½ in. diameter base
28 x 4¾ in. diameter base
14½ x 5½ x 4 in. no base
(plate 41)

Cenotaph for Li Po, 1971
Bronze, 42 x 2¼ x 1 in.
(plate 43)

Egyptian King, 1972
Bronze, 65½ x 14½ x 12 in.
(plate 44)

Sentry I (also called *Minotaur*), 1978
Various woods, 32 x 6 x 3 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Perimeter
Gallery, Chicago
(plate 45)

Window with View, 1979
Various woods, 50¾ x 16 x 7 in.
Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Museum, Rutgers,
The State University of New Jersey, New
Brunswick. Gift of the artist
(plate 46)

Scaffold, 1986
Corten steel, 101 x 29 x 12 in.
(plate 47)

Encounter, 1987
Fabricated steel, 144 in. high
Collection of Alice and Nathan Gantcher
(plate 50)

Couple, 1988
Corten steel, 55 x 48 x 12 in.
Private Collection
(plate 48)

Prelude and Fugue, 1989
Fabricated steel, 99 x 103 x 33 in.
Courtesy of Longhouse Foundation
Easthampton, New York
(plate 49)

Sancho Panza, 1989
Corten steel, 74 x 28 x 17 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Perimeter
Gallery, Chicago
(plate 51)

Breakwater, 1990
Fabricated steel, black paint
55 x 148 x 30 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Perimeter
Gallery, Chicago
(plate 53)

Demeter's Harrow, 1990
Corten steel, 28 x 48 x 32 in.
(plate 52)

Portal, 1990
Black steel, 60 x 50 x 32 in.
(plate 54)

Sanctum with Window I, 1990
Fabricated steel, 40 x 48 x 13 in.
(plate 55)

Sanctum with Window II, 1990-1991
Painted aluminum, 150 x 156 x 126 in.
Courtesy of the artist and André
Emmerich Gallery, New York
(plate 56)

Chopiniana (three pieces), 1992
Painted aluminum and steel,
23¼ x 9 x 3½ in.
29¼ x 16 x 9 in.
30¼ x 12 x 5¼ in.
(plate 58)

Dark Harmony, 1992
Fabricated steel, 98 x 60 x 4½ in.
Courtesy of the artist and Perimeter
Gallery, Chicago
(plate 59)

Stretcher Series I, 1992
Painted aluminum, 18¼ x 94 x 4½ in.
(plate 57)

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Prepared by Lisa Vignuolo

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Dehner, Dorothy. "Plexiglas Relief for the Great Southwest Industrial Park, Atlanta, Georgia, USA." *Leonardo*, 2 (April 1969) 171-172.

Dehner, Dorothy. "Past Tense, Two Lives." *Tracks*, (Spring 1977) 76-77.

Dehner, Dorothy. "Medals for Dishonor: The Fifteen Medallions of David Smith." *Art Journal*, 37 (Winter 1977/1978) 144-150.

Graham, John P. *System and Dialectics of Art*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971. Introduction by Dorothy Dehner. (First published in "John Graham a Memoir." *Leonardo*, 2 (1969) 287-293).

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Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture. The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965. Essay by Hans van Weeren-Griek.

Dorothy Dehner: Sculpture and Works on Paper. Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA, 1988. Essay by Dorothy Keane-White.

Dorothy Dehner and David Smith: Their Decades of Search and Fulfillment. Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1984. Essays by Joan M. Marter and Judith McCandless.

Dorothy Dehner: Heroic Sculpture. Twining Fine Art, New York, 1990.

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Chronology

1901

Born on December 23 in Cleveland, Ohio. Father was a pharmacist and a socialist; her mother was a suffragette. Dorothy was the third child in the family. Her sister Louise was five years older, and her brother John was born two years before Dorothy, but died at nine months. At a young age, Dorothy began to draw and paint watercolors. She attended the Detroit Street School and the Watterson Public School until the seventh grade. Father died when she was eleven.

1915

Family moves to Pasadena, California. Mother dies the following year, and her sister Louise dies of tuberculosis. Dorothy attends John Muir Junior High School for eighth and ninth grades, and continues her interest in painting and drawing. Receives art instruction at Pasadena High School.

1918-1921

Studies and acts with Gilmor Brown at the Pasadena Playhouse. Drawing and painting continues, although no formal instruction. Studies modern dance and ballet privately.

1921-1922

Drama major at University of California, Los Angeles.

1922-1924

Moves to New York City to study at the American Academy of Dramatic

Arts and to pursue a career in theater. Performs in The Little Theater's Off-Broadway productions with Walter Hartwig's Company.

1925

Travels alone to Europe, visiting Italy, Switzerland, and France. Sees the famous "l'Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes" in Paris, and returns with an enthusiasm for the "avant-garde." In September, enrolls at the Art Students League, studies drawing with Kimon Nicolaides.

1926

In September, meets David Smith at a rooming house at 417 West 118 Street. Recommends that Smith enroll at the Art Students League. Dehner studies oil painting in Kenneth Hayes Miller's day class while taking Nicolaides' night class.

1927

On December 24, Dehner and Smith are married at City Hall in New York City. They move to 15 Abingdon Square. Both Dehner and Smith continue their instruction at the Art Students League.

1928

Spends summer in California. Dehner and Smith move to Myra Court in Flatbush, Brooklyn.



David Smith and Dorothy Dehner,
December 1927

1929

Meets John Graham, and through Graham meets Stuart Davis, Arshile Gorky, and Milton Avery. Summer vacation in Bolton Landing, New York, as paying visitors to the Furlongs. Purchases farm with Smith at Bolton Landing in the Adirondack Mountains. From fall, 1929, to spring, 1931, studies with Jan Matulka at the Art Students League. Study with Matulka continues on Fourteenth Street.

1931-1932

September to following July, Dehner and Smith stay in the Virgin Islands. Dehner paints abstract still lifes incorporating sea shells.



Dorothy Dehner at Bolton Landing, ca. 1932

1932

Fall, returns to 124 State Street, Brooklyn. Continues painting still lifes.

1935

Leaves for Europe with David Smith, visiting Paris, Brussels, and cities of Greece. Spends five months in Greece and Crete.

1936

Visits Malta, Leningrad, and Moscow before returning to England. In Russia sees collections of twentieth-century paintings, including Matisse, Picasso, and other French modernists. Returns to United States, July 4.

1936-1940

Living in Brooklyn at 165 Congress Street; does still-life paintings, portraits, and drawings.

1940

Dehner and Smith settle permanently in Bolton Landing.

1941-1944

Paints egg tempera works depicting daily routine in "Life on the Farm" series. The idea for the miniature paintings came from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, a French fifteenth-century book of hours.

1945

Spends five months in New York City, apart from Smith. Returns to Bolton Landing. Exhibits with Smith at Albany Art Institute, New York. Makes drawings of weeping women and "Dances of Death" (through 1947).

1946

Participates in the annual exhibition of the Audubon artists (work sent secretly to the competition). Awarded prize for drawing; show exhibited at the American Academy of Arts and Letters Gallery, New York City.

1948

Produces biomorphic drawings based on micro-organisms. Exhibition of drawings and gouaches at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York.

1949

Begins series of abstract geometric ink and watercolor drawings that are her favored means of expression until she begins sculpting in 1955.

1950

First time exhibiting at the Annual Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art. Finds various positions at Bolton Landing, including a teaching job during the summer months at the Franziska Boas School of Dance. Organizes exhibitions of local artists for the lobby of the Bolton Landing Summer Theater. In November, leaves Bolton Landing and separates from Smith.

1951

Takes courses at Skidmore College to obtain teaching credentials. Included in the Whitney Annual Exhibition.

1952

In January, receives a bachelor's degree from Skidmore College. Solo exhibition of watercolors at Rose Fried Gallery in New York. Begins teaching at Barnard School for Girls. Moves to Rockland County, New York. Divorce from Smith finalized. Begins making prints at Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17. Meets Louise Nevelson and makes photographs of her work. Starts art program at the Indian Hill School of the Arts, Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Solo exhibition at the Albany Institute of History and Art.

1953

Participates in a group exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Museum of Modern Art acquires her watercolor, *From Japan*, 1951.

1955

Begins making sculpture in the lost-wax method. In May, participates in a three-artist show at the Willard Gallery (Dehner will show at Willard through 1976). Solo exhibition at The Art Institute of Chicago. Marries Ferdinand Mann and moves to 33 Fifth Avenue. Country residence is "Finney Farm" in Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

1957

First solo exhibition of sculpture held at the Willard Gallery. Obtains current studio space at 41 Union Square, her first work area separate from her living quarters. Exhibits in New Sculpture Group with Peter Agostini, Reuben Kadish, Philip Pavia, George Sugarman, and others. Invited to become a member of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, and the Sculptors Guild.

1959

Solo exhibition, Skidmore College. Participates in international exhibitions of prints (1959-1960s).

1960

Participates in *Aspects de la Sculpture Americaine*, Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris. First time showing sculpture at the Annual Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art.

1961

Solo exhibition, Columbia University, New York.

1965

Ten-year retrospective at The Jewish Museum, New York.

1970-1971

Receives Yaddo Foundation Fellowship. Visiting artist at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop.

1974

Ferdinand Mann dies. Dehner begins working in wood.

1978

Solo exhibition, Parsons-Dreyfuss Gallery, New York.

1981

Produces a series of monumental sculptures in corten steel.

1982

Awarded Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters, Skidmore College.

1983

Award from Women's Caucus for Art for outstanding achievement in the visual arts.

1984

Exhibition, *Dorothy Dehner and David Smith: Their Decades of Search and Fulfillment*, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and Skidmore College Art Gallery.

1987

Solo exhibition, Associated American Artists, New York. Award of Distinction, National Sculpture Conference: Works by Women, University of Cincinnati.

1988

Included in exhibition, *Enduring Creativity*, Whitney Museum of American Art, Stamford, Connecticut. Solo exhibitions, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Twining Fine Art, New York.

1990

Solo exhibitions at The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C., and Twining Fine Art, New York.

1991

Solo exhibition at Baruch College Art Gallery, New York.

1992

Solo exhibition, Perimeter Gallery, Chicago. Sculpture and drawings shown at Chicago Art Fair.

1993

Retrospective exhibition opens at the Katonah Museum of Art. Works shown at Chicago Art Fair.

Solo Exhibitions

Dorothy Dehner, Rose Fried Gallery, New York, May 5–31, 1952.

Dorothy Dehner, Etchings, Morris Gallery, New York, June 27–August 31, 1952.

Dorothy Dehner, Albany Institute of History and Art, August–September, 1952.

Dorothy Dehner, Etchings and Engravings, Wittenborn Gallery, New York, January 9–21, 1956.

Dorothy Dehner, Sculpture and Watercolors, Willard Gallery, New York, May 7–31, 1957.

Dehner Bronzes, Willard Gallery, New York, February 3–28, 1959.

Dorothy Dehner Bronzes, Willard Gallery, New York, November 1–26, 1960.

Dorothy Dehner, A Selection of Bronzes, Columbia University (Avery Hall), New York, April 16–May 1, 1961.

Dorothy Dehner, Willard Gallery, New York, February 5–March 2, 1963.

Dorothy Dehner, Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, March 11–April 11, 1965.

Dorothy Dehner, Recent Bronzes, Willard Gallery, New York, November 15–December 10, 1966.

Dorothy Dehner, The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, May 21–June 18, 1967.

Dorothy Dehner, Bernard M. Baruch Gallery, City University of New York, March, 1970.

Dorothy Dehner, Willard Gallery, New York, April 21–May 23, 1970.

Dorothy Dehner, Sculpture and Drawings, Parsons/Dreyfuss Gallery, New York, February 20–March 10, 1979.

Dorothy Dehner, A. Sachs, New York, March 31–April 24, 1983.

Dorothy Dehner and David Smith, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, January 15–March 4, 1984.

Dorothy Dehner, Sculpture and Works on Paper, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, April 14–May 22, 1988.

Dorothy Dehner: Heroic Sculpture, Twining Fine Art, New York, 1990.

Dorothy Dehner, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., March 10–May 20, 1990.

Dorothy Dehner, Baruch College Art Gallery, City University of New York, March 15–April 16, 1991.

Dorothy Dehner, Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, April 10–May 2, 1992.

Selected Group Exhibitions

Painting and Sculpture Acquisitions, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 1, 1951–May 31, 1953.

Watercolors, Willard Gallery, New York, May 3–28, 1955.

International Watercolor Exhibition, 18th Biennial, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1955.

Fifth Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture, Stable Gallery, New York, May 22–June 16, 1956.

Sculpture, Various Times and Various Cultures, Willard Gallery, New York, January 3–26, 1957 (3 bronzes included).

Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, March 14–April 7, 1957.

Trends in Watercolor Today, The Brooklyn Museum, New York, April 9–May 26, 1957.

Directions in Sculpture, Riverside Museum, New York, December 1–22, 1957.

Painting and Sculpture Acquisitions, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 1, 1959–December 31, 1959.

Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Eighteenth Annual Exhibition, Riverside Museum, New York, March 29–April 26, 1959. (also 23rd Annual Exhibition, January 12–26, 1964).

New Sculpture Group, Stable Gallery, New York, September 28–October 24, 1959.

Aspects de la Sculpture Americaine, Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris, October, 1960.

New Sculpture Group, Fifth Exhibition, Stable Gallery, New York, September 27–October 15, 1960.

Annual Exhibition, Contemporary Sculpture and Drawing, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, December 7, 1960–January 22, 1961.

New Sculpture Group, Holland-Goldowsky Gallery, Chicago, March 10–April 6, 1961.

The Quest and the Quarry, Rome-New York Art Foundation, Inc., Rome, May–September, 1961.

New Sculpture Group, Sixth Exhibition, Stable Gallery, New York, September 19–October 14, 1961.

Twelve New York Sculptors, Riverside Museum, New York, April 8–29, 1962.

Small Sculpture: Robert Adams, Dorothy Dehner, Elizabeth Frink, Barbara Hepworth, The Waddington Galleries, London, July 1962.

New Directions, Sculpture, American Federation of Arts, New York, October, 1962–May, 1963 (traveled throughout the United States).

Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Inc., New York, 22 Annual Exhibition, January 13–27, 1963 (also 1964).

Sculptors Guild Exhibition, New York, October 22–November 21, 1963 (also 1964, 1967, 1972, 1973).

Triennale de Milano, Palazzo dell'Arte Parco Sempione Milano, 1964.

Landscape in Abstraction, The Sculptors Guild, New York, April 18–May 6, 1967.

National Association of Women Artists, Annual Exhibition, New York, May 14–31, 1970.

Artists of Lake George, 1776–1976, The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, June 26–September 8, 1976.

Modern Masters: Women of the First Generation, Women Artists Series at Douglass College, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, December 1–21, 1982.

Standing Ground: Sculpture by American Women, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, March 27–May 10, 1987.

The New Sculpture Group, A Look Back: 1957–1962, New York Studio School, March 8–April 8, 1988.

John Graham: Artist and Avatar, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., July 9–September 4, 1988 (also shown at Neuberger Museum, State University of New York at Purchase; Newport Harbor Art Museum, California, and University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, and Smart Gallery, University of Chicago) [Dehner's painting included with Alexander Calder, Arshile Gorky, David Smith, Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock].

Centennial Exhibition, National Association of Women Artists, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, New York, November–December, 1988.

Enduring Creativity, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1988. American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century, Knoxville Museum of Art, Tennessee, and Queensborough Community College, New York, 1989.

The Coming of Age of American Sculpture: The First Decades of the Sculptors Guild, 1930s–1950s, Lowe Gallery, Hofstra University, New York, February–March, 1990.

Paths to Discovery: The New York School, Baruch College Art Gallery, City University of New York, March–April, 1992.

Selected Public Collections

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, NY

Seattle Art Museum, Seattle

Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul

Jewett Art Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland

AT&T Headquarters, Basking Ridge, NJ

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick

Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art, Utica, NY

The British Museum, London

Executive Mansion, Albany, NY

Dresden Museum, Dresden, Germany

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